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June 2004 No. 112

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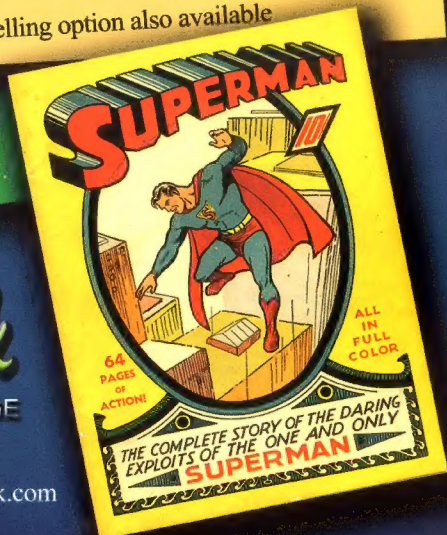
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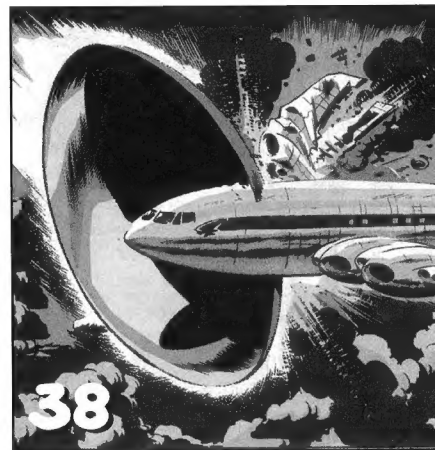
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I thought it might be illuminating for a comics fan of my age (67) to discuss how we used to buy our comic books back in the "old days." I grew up in the small town of West Plains, Missouri, and I could buy my comic books at Wilke's Drug Store, Model Drug Store, Kimberlin's Book Store, or Crozier's Cut-Rate Drug Store. Leonard Crozier, who owned the store, was a character. He sold nickel candy bars for 4¢, trying his best to undercut his competitors. He even sold comic books for 9¢. Of course, there were no malls, no comic book shops, no specialty stores, just these few outlets. In a small-town situation like this it is highly probable that the same distributor serviced all these outlets. In larger cities, different distributors would service different locations, meaning you might have to go to several different retailers to find all the comics you were looking for.

There was a time, around 1951-52, when I was buying EC Comics off the newsstand, before I became a subscriber. If *Vault of Horror* #22 was sold out at Wilke's, there was a good chance I could find it at one of the other stores.

Wilke's had by far the best display. On a wall approximately 10 feet wide and 10 feet tall he nailed a series of horizontal slats, which the comics sat on with a length of stovepipe wire running between each slat to support the comics. In this way he was able to display the entire comic cover. When you wanted to buy a comic, you didn't remove one from the display (unless it was the last copy), but from a stack on a low shelf.

Kimberlin's Book Store not only sold comic books, but was also the local distributor for the daily and Sunday newspapers from Springfield, Missouri, St. Louis, and Kansas City. Mr. Kimberlin hired delivery boys who usually traveled by bicycle to deliver their papers. Some boys had morning deliveries and had to get up before daylight to roll and deliver their papers. Others had after-school paper routes; I was one of those. The newspaper delivery boys were underpaid, but were given a very special bonus. For example, let's say that Mr. Kimberlin has just received his monthly shipment of *Walt Disney's Comics* #50. He goes to his display rack and removes all the copies of #49 before he puts the new copies out. These unsold copies of #49 have to be accounted for so he tears off the top third of the front cover, which contains the title and issue number, and he returns these to his distributor for a refund. He is supposed to destroy or throw away all those copies of #49 which have had the title stripped, but while they are sitting in the back room waiting to be thrown away we paper boys were free to take whatever we want.

The excellent article by Will Murray about the Nedor comics reminds me that I don't think I ever bought a Nedor comic. I did have access to them through trading, and here's the way that worked. Let's say it's 1947. Every kid in town reads comic books and has a stack of them at home. I was a gluttonous reader of comic books and always had several large stacks on hand. I'd go through my comic books one by one, keeping the ones I liked best or wanted to read again, and weeding out the others into a trading stack. Then I'd take this stack of comics over to Gene Taylor's house and let him go through the stack. If he found 20 comics from my stack, then I got to choose 20 comics from his stack. So even though I never bought a Nedor comic I did trade for them. It was the same with Lev Gleason comics. I rarely bought one off the stands, but David Galloway loved them and I could always trade with him for all I wanted.

Seems like old times.

Russ

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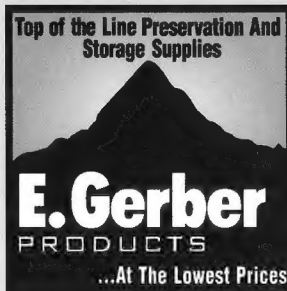
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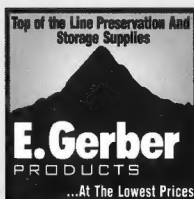
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Soteris comicus ab Perdita

Julius Schwartz left a legacy that will live on forever, as he brought about the birth of the Silver Age by revamping characters like Flash, Hawkman, Green Lantern, Atom and creating the Justice League of America. This in turn gave some influence to Stan Lee at Marvel Comics to create a super-hero team, the Fantastic Four. I believe without Julius Schwartz, the whole super-hero genre would have fallen into limbo. Julius Schwartz will remain a hero to all of comic book fandom. He will be missed.

Paul Dale Roberts, President
Peoples' Comic Book Newsletter
Elk Grove CA

Amen, and Amen!

RC

Suggestions for CBM:

*More Color.

*110's cover mislead readers to believe the Norm Saunders feature article would be about his work on the Topps' "Mars Attacks" and "Batman" trading card series—and they were never mentioned! It said, "To be cont'd in a future issue"! When? Your guess is as good as mine.

*Don't change the name but less on sales numbers and statues would be better.

*If you plan to reprint full comics, whether in this mag or through another project, kindly include EC's Picto-

Fiction line, which has yet to be reprinted, anywhere, and fans could finally see the third issues of each of the line's titles, which never saw publication, at all. I noticed that the coverage of the two cover stories for *CBM* #110 were quite disparate; Norm's was only seven pages whilst Alex Ross had nearly *twenty pages*. I hope part 2 of Norm's (whenever it appears), will have equal page count to Alex's, considering it will be covering the time most of the readers will be familiar with (his Topps series days). Respectfully,

Vinny Bellizia
North Brunswick NJ

Thanks for writing, Vinny. Your points are all well taken. I think that Gemstone has cleared the final hurdle in getting permission to publish the EC Picto-Fiction magazines as a component of the EC Library. We plan to publish everything in four volumes, one for each title, collecting the published stories along with the unpublished stories. Gemstone will be announcing this soon, so hang in there just a little bit longer!

And, about the length of the Norm Saunders article as compared with the Alex Ross article—it just worked out that way! Going in, we had no plans to use a certain number of pages for Saunders and a certain number for Ross. As editor, I like to give the authors of the articles in CBM as much room as possible to do what they want. When we had more pages on Saunders than would fit into the issue, I decided that Ross was the more important artist related to today's

comics. When will we finish the Saunders article? I'm not sure myself! But the next time we can fit it in, we'll do it.

RC

Objection!

Dan Johnson wrote that Dr. Doom was spared from becoming merely Marvel's answer to Lex Luthor. I object to this! The incredible Lex Luthor has been around since *Action* #23. He has gone from mad scientist, to big businessman, to U.S. President. Lex stole the show in the Superman movies in the person of Gene Hackman. Luthor, portrayed by Michael Rosenbaum, is a gem in *Smallville*. Lex is "merely" over 60 years old!

Richard M. Brown
Detroit, MI

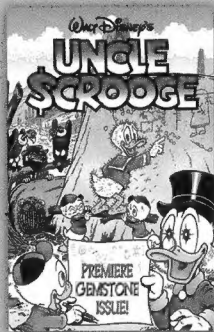
As another person who is merely over 60 years old, I have to agree with you. Lex was around when I started reading comic books back in the Dark Ages of WWII. Dr. Doom—who's that?

RC

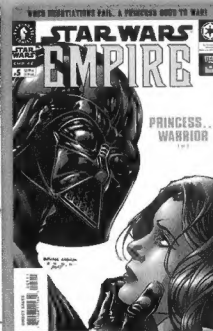
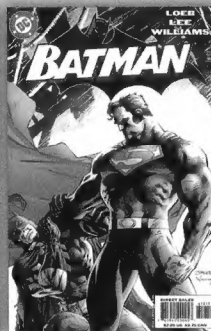
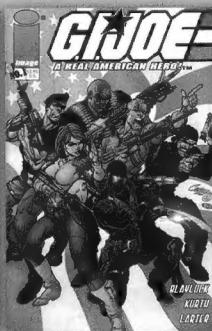
Carry on

I applaud your decision to "stay the course" with the current style and content of *CBM*. I also wanted you to know that in my opinion, the magazine has definitely improved in content choice and layout since you took over.

That's not to impugn the excellent work of Gary Carter. But I have found that the general choice of articles in your tenure has been more interesting for me
[continued on page 12]



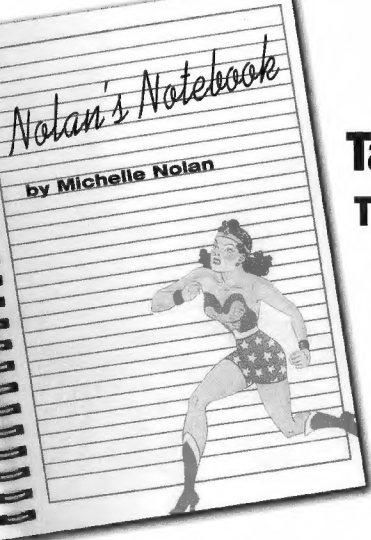
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Take Me to Your Reader

The Curious Case of Cosmo the Merry Martian

primary spaceship, sending their satellite-shaped ships packing.

Then there was the evocative cover of *Little Archie* #7 (Summer 1958), in which a tearful Betty tries to tie down Little Archie's spaceship as our little hero tells Veronica goodbye.

There were even satellite promotions in anticipation of the real thing, such as the title of a digest-sized magazine, *Satellite Science Fiction*, which began an 18-issue run with the September 1956 issue. Not to mention one of the duller science fiction films of the 1950s, a talky British epic released in 1956 amazingly entitled *Satellite in the Sky*. I've always thought that film ties with a western called *Rustlers on Horseback* for some sort of mythical redundant title prize. Incidentally, to the best of my knowledge no other movie ever started with the word "Satellite," although there were the post-Sputnik likes of *War of the Satellites* (1958).

But for sheer commercialization, nothing could beat the decision of Republic Pictures to repackage its 1952 serial *Zombies of the Stratosphere*—with a 21-year-old Leonard Nimoy playing a Martian—to create a 1958 feature version entitled *Satan's Satellites*. Neither Satan nor satellites had anything to do with the story, though there were several nifty scenes

with Commando Cody's leftover flying suit.

So enamored was I with satellites and outer space that I even spent one dollar—big money for a 10-year-old in those days—to buy my first Tom Swift Junior book, *Tom Swift on the Phantom Satellite*, on February 14, 1958, according to my scrawl on the flyleaf. The book, though, originally appeared in 1956.

All of this is by way of providing a prelude for one of the niftiest of all Space Race-inspired titles, *Cosmo the Merry Martian*. Cosmo was a pleasantly surprising and completely unexpected

When the Soviet Union orbited the first artificial earth satellite on October 4, 1957, the world-shaking event also launched American pop culture into new commercial ventures in space. Sputnik did much more than shock the United States into high gear in the Space Race. Sputnik was soon followed by another Soviet orbiter nearly three months before the United States launched its first satellite on January 31, 1958.

Satellites and rockets by the dozens soon began to appear on the covers of magazines, paperbacks, books, movie posters—and, of course, comic books. The intense interest in all things outer space surely inspired the creation of one of the scarcer and funnier comic book series of the late 1950s, *Cosmo the Merry Martian* from the Archie Series.

Space travel and satellites consistently inspired humor as well as high adventure, including one of my favorite funny animal covers—*Daffy Duck* #16 (Jan-Mar 1959). This surreal image shows Daffy playing tennis with a satellite above the curvature of the Earth.

Cosmo was among the earliest comic book series to take advantage of the Space Race, but it was far from the first. One of the first post-Sputnik comics to make the most of satellites was DC's *Mystery in Space* #43 (May 1958), cover-featuring "Invaders from the Space-Satellites!" The neat twist in this tale, by the way, was the launching of a giant arrow to puncture the aliens'



Cosmo the Merry Martian #1 (Sep 1958).



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out-of-this-world venture from the previously earthbound Archie Series.

The Archie Series, as it was dubbed in the plain logo on the cover during the late 1950s, had not been the byword for publisher John Goldwater's Archie Series folks, who went by indicia names like Radio Comics and Close-Up.

In fact, it wasn't until 1959, when so much of the competition had fallen by the four-color wayside, that the Archie Series published as many as 100 issues. The Archie Series—which began as MLJ in the Golden Age and was 20 years old in 1959—produced 100 issues on the

launched and I considered the headlines a dandy birthday gift!—I welcomed *Cosmo* when I first spied the title on the stands early in the summer of 1958. I eagerly bought the book, even if *Cosmo* and his sidekick Orbi did look suspiciously like a cross between a bowling pin and a fireplug.

I did not welcome *Cosmo*, though, anywhere near as much as my dear friend Russell Ciochon. Russ, a

University of Iowa professor and paleoanthropologist who has become a well-known author and globe-trotting explorer in his field, was not a big-time comic book enthusiast, but *Cosmo* really tickled his fancy.

I can't remember if Russ read my issues of *Cosmo the Merry Martian* or I read his—or maybe we both bought them—but it was right up his alley. I tended to go for hard-core science fiction like Heinlein's *Rocket Ship Galileo* and *Red Planet*. But Russ—always a more sophisticated reader than I was and now a noted Oz book collector along with his wife, Noriko—also

enjoyed wonderfully whimsical science fiction books, such as Eleanor Cameron's *Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet* and *Stowaway to the Mushroom Planet*.

When *Cosmo* vanished not once, but

twice, both Russ and I orbited the comic book racks, wondering where our affable alien had gone. The first time, there was a frustrating sixth-month gap between *Cosmo* #2 (Nov 1958) and *Cosmo* #3 (Apr 1959); we welcomed #3 like a long-lost friend. But after *Cosmo* #6 (Oct 1959), we never saw the friendly little Martian and his crew again.

By that time, though, Adam Strange—one of the most dynamic original science fiction heroes since Flash Gordon—was appearing in *Mystery in Space*. And I was also so busy reading science fiction books—more than 250 from 1959 to 1961—that my generally wise sixth-grade teacher warned me that “all those science fiction books will rot your brain.” I'll leave it to you to evaluate her prophecy, but it's a good thing I never told her about my comic books!

Cosmo, though, was wonderful while he lasted. This was truly otherworldly whimsy at its best, drawn by a little-known but talented cartoonist, Bob White, who signed only the covers.

What made *Cosmo* unique was that this was a six-issue series of interconnected comical novels, complete with extensive continuity. Each issue left the reader hungry for the next in ways that were well ahead of their time. If these six issues could be reprinted, they would make a dandy 146-page graphic novel!

There was nothing quite like *Cosmo* on the stands at the time. These comics were *fun*! They still hold up pretty well today, though they aren't as sophisticated as the likes of Uncle Scrooge. But *Cosmo*, unlike Scrooge, was not really meant to be read on two levels.

About 15 years ago, I was fortunate enough to rediscover all six issues of *Cosmo*—perhaps someone's childhood

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Cosmo the Merry Martian #3 (Apr 1958).

nose that year to account for one out of every 15 comic books published. (And, I'll wager, for well over one out of every 10 sold.)

As a budding space buff—I turned 10 the day after the first U.S. satellite was

set—in a comic book store. They were cheap because each had a page or two torn out, but since the Cosmo stories were all complete, I bought them anyway. I also realized they were (and still are) uncommon issues from that period.

What a hoot! The memories they brought back were priceless. When I recently re-read them, I caught myself laughing out loud a lot. It was an hour of sheer fun. Re-reading them also reminded me of the fun Russ and I had swapping the comics. In those days, the entire neighborhood traded funny books. (I refused to part with many of mine, of course.)

from Mars to the Moon to Earth in the first issue, then to the dark side of the moon followed by epic trips to Venus, Saturn and back to Mars during the six-issue series.

One interesting aspect of this series is that solar system distances and so forth were actually accurate. I probably already had learned about the distance from Earth to the other planets before I read this series, but I looked it up again and the information reinforced my knowledge.

When Cosmo's ship is punctured by a meteor on the way to Earth in his first adventure, Cosmo and Orbi are forced to land on the moon, where Shmoo-like creatures, known as Moonlings and all named Oog, greet them with outrageous puns. "Where are your mooners?" one Oog asks a rude fellow Oog. Their leader, of course, is the Prime Moonister.

When they all decide to continue to Earth in a fleet of flying saucers, Cosmo and Orbi are nearly hit by Sputnik and the Oogs tell them, "The Earth people have been shooting them into space! It's their new hobby! Earth

people are always up to something!"

The first issue ends with eight hysterical pages when Cosmo and the

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Oogs—who are invisible to Earthlings—play havoc with a baseball game. "Let's get that dandy cushion," one Oog tells another as they swipe second base, with frantic results ensuing among the players.

The second issue becomes a plea for tolerance when Cosmo and Orbi dare to venture to the dark side of the moon and bring back the Gillywump, whose blue skin color and big nose make him feared by the other Oogs. The issue had a cliffhanger ending, but there was a six-month wait for *Cosmo* #3. That was uncommon for the generally stable Archie Series, but perhaps there was a problem with the creative crew. At any rate, by the time #3 appeared, the indicia indicated second-class postage had been approved and subscription rates were listed.

Alas, anyone who subscribed was destined to receive only three more issues. They were all worth twice the price, though. In #4 (Jun 1959), *Cosmo* & Co. meet the Queen of Venus, who "looks like those pin-up girls the Earth men go for," as Cosmo puts it.

Cosmo, of course, is eventually rescued from the clutches of the Queen. I can't help wondering if this story was inspired by a similar tale—one of the funniest science fiction films of all time, *Queen of Outer Space* starring Zsa Zsa Gabor (who was not the Queen, by the way) and a cast ranging from little-knowns to never-knowns. This Allied Artists film was released in September 1958, just one more relic of the attempt to take commercial advantage of the Space Race.

The screenplay for *Queen of Outer Space* was written by Charles Beaumont, normally one of the best fantasy writers of that era, based on a story by Ben



Cosmo the Merry Martian #4 (Jun 1958).

Cosmo and Orbi, who were joined in the third issue by Cosmo's girlfriend Astra and Professor Think, rocketed

Hecht, who for many years had been highly respected for his hilarious comedy *The Front Page*. Whether by design or not, *Queen of Outer Space* wound up being one of the most laugh-filled science fiction epics of all time, ranking right down there with *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman*, which was released on a double-bill in May 1958 along with *War of the Satellites*. By the by, *Attack* featured an alien who landed in, of course, a satellite-shaped spaceship!

Given all these space shenanigans, one might have expected *Cosmo* to succeed, especially after the crew visited Saturn in a rousing story in #5 (Aug 1959). By the way, one of the few scientific errors in this series appeared on the splash page in the introduction, "Looming through space at 500 miles per minute is a giant rocket ship. Its destination—the planet Saturn!" At 500 miles per minute, the ship's speed of slightly more than eight miles per second indeed would have surpassed the escape velocity of both Earth and Venus, yet their rocket would have taken several years to reach Saturn.

One of the funniest lines I've ever seen in a comic was uttered by an Oog when the crew discovers that the inhabitants of Saturn are talking carrots, tomatoes, cabbages and potatoes. "The Saturn people look just like vegetables," one Oog says, to which another Oog replies, "Gee! I wonder what their vegetables look like?" To which Cosmo responds, "It takes all kinds to make a galaxy, Astra!" When she asks, "Are there any vegetable people on Earth?" Cosmo responds, "I think so! There was one lady they called Pickle-Puss!"

In issue 6 (Oct 1959), Cosmo defeats the infamous Dr. Beatnik—where else would you see beatniks and space ships in the same comic?—and his nefarious plan to prevent the Earth from launching more satellites. At the end of the tale, readers are urged to "Watch the Skies!" for Cosmo's next visit to Earth. Alas, Cosmo and his crew were never to return.

Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 6]

as a 40-year old collector to read. I grew up on Bronze Age comics, and am not particularly interested in super-heroes of any generation, so articles like the very excellent one on Harry Chesler's work are greatly appreciated.

My suggestions for continued improvement? More articles on Golden Age books and publishers that are not DC or Marvel. Reports on '50s genre books other than the usual (EC). I'd love to see someone do a column, or a series of short articles, on restoration, which is getting a terribly bad rap these days. A column or piece on comics preservation would also be helpful, as well as a survey of the auction houses—in other

words, more "how-to" stuff about serious collecting!

Finally, I know that true journalistic objectivity is difficult when you are part of the [Diamond] Empire, but if Geppi can handle it, I wouldn't mind seeing some thoughtful criticism of the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, or some year-to-year comparisons of how the value structures within that book have changed. Thanks for your time,

Eric Martin

Thanks a lot for your kudos! As I remarked in a recent editorial, when I took over the reins of CBM, I started making changes, to turn it into my magazine! But after a few issues I could

see that CBM is your magazine, and for the last year or more we have been trying to achieve the balance of feature articles about comics that you most want to see. And incidentally, the only measure we have to go by is your letters to the editor. I guarantee you that we pay attention to each letter we get, and each one is important. If you are going to take the time to write CBM and voice your opinion, we are surely going to take the time to listen! Keep those letters coming, folks!

RC

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by Pat Calhoun

Attack of the UFCOs

They rose up in the late 1950s, a by-product of the space race. Science fiction comics had a renaissance. Even those strange comics that one bought in a bag of three for 25 cents at the department store contained a fair share of SF. Oh, those unidentified four-color objects (UFCOs!) had a logo all right, a little pyramid with IW (for “publisher” Israel Waldman) in it, but what wasn’t clear was that these were (in some cases) unauthorized reprints of material previously published by other companies and reputedly obtained by the unsavory act of “liberating” used printing plates from the owner’s garbage! This could explain IW’s curious distribution methods as no magazine carriers would handle his pirated reprints despite their hiding behind new covers and titles.

After identifying IW’s ethics as dubious, it must be said that from a collector’s viewpoint these books are often fun and a good way to enjoy some otherwise scarce and expensive early-1950s comics. And after branding these books as UFCOs it seems right to let IW show us some UFOs—one of the classic icons that quickly proclaim a book as SF when spied on a magazine rack or even hanging from a spinner in a department store!

Man O’ Mars #1 (and only!) is undated, but probably hails from 1958. Under a Sid Check UFO cover that’s really well done lie various Fiction House reprints. The lead tale comes straight from the FH 1953 *Man O’ Mars*

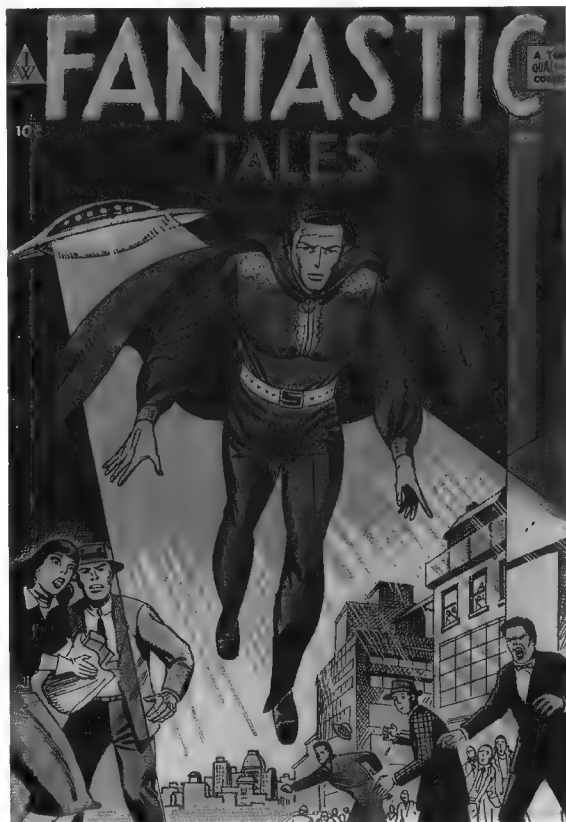
one-shot, filled out by Star Pirate and Space Rangers, both from *Planet Comics*. As a bonus, also from *Planet*, two of Murphy Anderson’s two-page Life on Other Worlds features (Uranus and Saturn) are included. Murph did this series—some of his first pro work—as an homage to the great Frank R. Paul’s run of interplanetary back covers for the pulps *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures* in the early 1940s.

Fantastic Tales #1 (1958?) reprints Avon’s 1952 one-shot *City of the Living Dead*. Thus the UFO cover is a bit misleading as the book is horror and not SF; it’s almost certainly the work of Sol Brodsky, in the style of the tons of work he produced in his long association with Atlas. “City of the Living Dead” is a seven-pager of deathless demons down in Mexico’s ancient Yucatan and how lust for gold lures the greedy to a grim fate. The best thing about the story is the art by A. C. Hollingsworth—detailed, distinctive and dynamic!

There are also three unrelated horror shorts, two with effective art by Norman Nodel and Vince Alascia, and a creeper called “Death Has Many Tongues”—a good story well told by

the exciting graphics of Harry Lazarus.

Since *Space Mysteries* #1 (1958?) reprints *Journey into Unknown Worlds* #4 (1951), the most SF-oriented (especially the early issues) of the Atlas fantasy titles, the colorful and engaging UFO cover is totally appropriate. The first story, “Return from Mars” is a classic, with much credit due to Russ Heath’s superb art. On what must be one of his first Atlas efforts Heath breaks out a very vivid pure SF style that is a joy to



Fantastic Tales #1 (1958?). The cover art is by Sol Brodsky, Atlas stalwart and Waldman’s future partner. Note that the (obviously!) non-Code-approved IW books created their own approval stamp, marking it “A Top Quality Comic!”

MANY DANGERS, BOTH SEEN AND UNSEEN, LURK IN THE DARK SILENCE OF THE CONGO LAND! THE INVISIBLE ONES ARE THE MOST DEADLY—AS CAPTAIN DEATH LEARNED! THE NATIVES CALLED HIM BY THAT NAME BECAUSE THE RUTHLESS SLAVE TRADER HAD SENT SO MANY OF THEM TO THEIR GRAVES. WHEN THEIR WATCO BROTHER FINALLY FELL INTO THEIR HANDS, THEY INVOKED THE DREAD SORCERY OF THEIR ANCESTORS TO TEACH HIM THAT....

DEATH HAS MANY TONGUES



behold! The plot has Martians disguised as humans infiltrating the political leadership of various countries to foment a war that will keep us weak enough to be overcome when the aliens invade. So

Basil to create his masterpieces.

The rest of the issue is unmemorable, as *Journey into Unknown Worlds* #4 came out dated April 1951 when Atlas was still gearing up their fantasy factory.

Man O' Mars #1

(1958?). On this obscure reprint of Fiction House space opera Sid Check created one of the great UFO covers. Joe Simon (who did a bunch for him) says Waldman paid well for covers. IW got his money's worth on Sid's saucer spectacular!

Space Mysteries #1

(1958?). The fact that this book reprints Atlas' *Journey into Unknown Worlds* #4 is strong evidence that IW was pirating used plates. Or is there an explanation for why Atlas would allow such a thing?

"Death Has Many Tongues." It's the rudest rash ever as native magic makes his victims' heads sprout from the evil slave trader's flesh. Harry Lazarus' art balances between gruesome and gross—even when Captain Death grabs his machete (*Fantastic Tales* #1)!

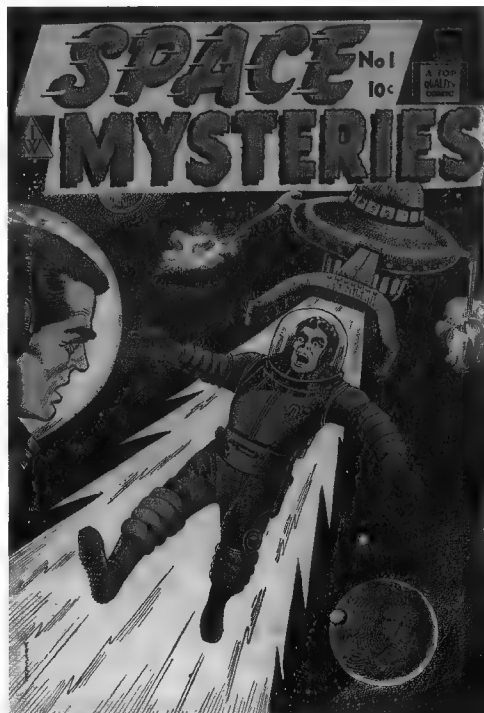
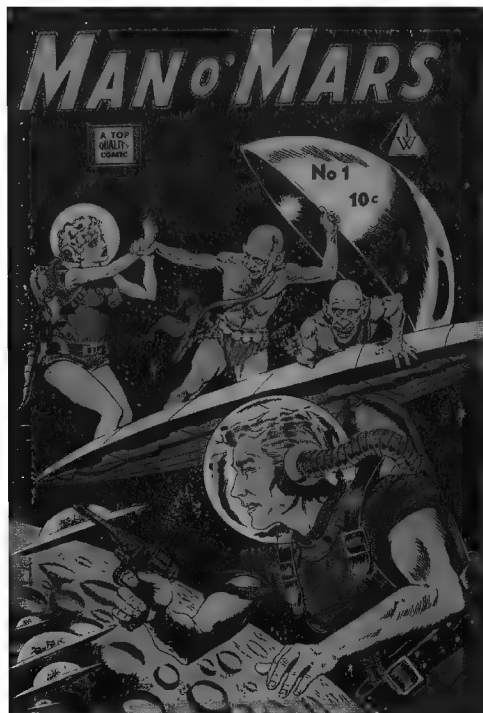
the narrator becomes a paranoid "peacenik" urging us to resist the rush into a war that will set us all up for conquest. Heath achieves a definitive look reminiscent of Basil Wolverton's Atlas fantasy stories that came out a few months after this and may have even inspired

They developed pretty far from a rough start, really coming into their own in 1952, which makes the (early) brilliance of "Return to Mars" even more intense.

Just to be fair let's listen to Joe Simon say nice things about Israel Waldman (from Joe's book *The Comic Book Makers*):

When Mainline closed...I set up a meeting with Mr. Waldman at his...office in the heart of New York's diamond district.... There was no sign...only the number told me I had the right office. Inside...I found myself facing another door...huge, iron, intimidating.... A tinny voice from an unseen sound system...requested that I state my name and business. I did.... I could see the door snap from its lock...

Mr. Waldman...leaned over a well-scratched wooden desk with peeling varnish holding neat stacks of yellowing



Joe came away thrilled to have gotten \$1500 for his Mainline inventory. So IW didn't pilfer everything, and (again according to



Wonderful Russ Heath splash and chilling "first contact" panels as an Earth cop finds cosmic horror when the man he pulled over for speeding proves to be not a man at all, but a Martian agent provocateur. "Return From Mars," **Space Mysteries #1.**



Murphy Anderson achieves a stellar panel layout on page two of the Life on Other Worlds feature on "Saturn," reprinted from **Planet Comics**, as are Star Pirate, Star Rangers, and the Life on Other Worlds two-page tour of "Uranus" (**Man O' Mars** #1).

Joe) in those tough times “He was the last hurrah for the comics entrepreneur who had decided to close shop.” The second batch of IW books, cover-priced twelve cents and—again—undated (but listed as 1964) billed themselves as published by Super Comics. And in the early 1970s Waldman—in partnership with the aforementioned Sol Brodsky—published a line of black-and-white magazine-sized horror comics featuring original material under the imprint of Skywald.

As a final note, this author remembers seeing his first IW books in the early 1960s and sensing that the material inside them came “from another time or space.” It took several years to puzzle out when they came from, but as someone who grew to feel that the early 1950s were the finest years of comics, I praise these books that brought me treasures from that fabled elusive era. And so this salute to the UFO covers of IW’s UFCOs. 🍷



While he's probably best known for his universe-spanning [and -destroying] epics featuring *Dreadstar*, *Adam Warlock* and *Thanos*, a closer examination of Jim Starlin's output over the past few decades reveals that that particular kind of tale is but the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Even a cursory reading of Starlin's body of work reveals an astonishing range of themes and subjects, both profound and prosaic, which are conveyed with subtlety and grace via the interaction between the narrative and visual channels. All of which should come as no real surprise once you discover that everything he's ever read, seen, or experienced has had—and continues to have—a real and lasting affect upon both the man and the comics creator.

"I am a Camera"

Jim Starlin on his influences

Comic Book Marketplace: Who were some of the different people, whether they created comics or novels, who have had an influence on your work you over the years?

Jim Starlin: Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Gil Kane, Joe Kubert, Carmine Infantino. Those are the five, I think, that inspired me the most when I was a kid as far as drawing. As far as writing goes, I start off with Charles Dickens, work through Roger Zelazny to [John] Cheever, Shakespeare. Just about anything I read, some way or another, affects me when I'm writing. I just recently read a very funny book called *Vernon God Little* which helped me tremendously in dealing with a teenager in *The Cosmic Guard* [mini-series]. Everything's an inspiration.

CBM: What about movies?

Starlin: Movies? Everything from *Citizen Kane* to *The Man Who Would Be King*, to the Pixar cartoons. They all filter in there somewhere. [Laughter]

CBM: It sounds like you're pretty omnivorous when it comes to reading and films.

Starlin: I try. My lady, Sonny, is much more a book hound than I am; she reads about three books to every one of my one. But she's also a very good source for saying, "Hey, this is a good one. You ought to try it out."

CBM: I was wondering, jumping back to Kubert and Carmine and the rest, what about their individual work or

styles captured your attention and sparked your imagination?

Starlin: Well, if you look at my stuff, Kirby is obviously an influence. Kubert? He had such beautiful mood in his stories. Those old Sgt. Rocks that [Robert] Kanigher wrote, they just dripped with mood. Gil had an excitement in just the way his figures moved.

Ditko was a master storyteller. He was the one cartoonist I actually met while I was still a kid. I came to New York, and he was the only one who would answer his door. [General laughter] He was quite an inspiration for me, still to this day. I look back to those *Spider-Mans* and *Doctor Strange*, and just the simplicity and mood that he was able to elicit with just those few lines was incredible.

CBM: How about his sense of design?

Starlin: Well, Steve's design sense was kind of strange. In fact, there was something kind of clumsy about it, but it worked so well in what he was doing. He was like a calligrapher in a lot of ways in how he would draw. If you look at his suits, a person in a business suit, they were out of style by at least twenty years whenever he drew them, but he had just the slash to give you an idea of where the lighting would come from. Nobody would dare try that these days. I think there's a few folks, like P. Craig Russell, who try to do something similar to it, but Steve was the master of that sort of thing. I just found his work incredible to

look at. And he was a dream storyteller. Easily up there with Jack as far as storytelling goes.

CBM: Right. I did want to ask a little more about Jack's influence on your work. You say it's obvious, but at risk of belaboring it, besides the storytelling aspect, was it also the way he could capture the sense of power and majesty of the characters on the page which hit you so hard about his work?

Starlin: Oh, yeah. His cubistic styling was just perfect for comic books. A slash here, a slash there, and there was a muscle. He used all this dynamic composition where everything was right there, in your face. Everybody who worked in comic books, even contemporaries of him, was clearly inspired by what he did then. He changed what comic books were about in his time. They called him the King. It's a title he earned.

CBM: What about Carmine?

Starlin: Carmine's work was just beautiful. There was some good storytelling back in those old *Flashes*. He began to lose me when he took over *Batman*, and they started going on that campy route with it. But when he and Murphy Anderson worked together—especially on those *Mystery in Spaces*—they were just beautiful comics books. They look a little stilted now, just because they were [drawn from] full comic book scripts, and so he was always working in very small panels for the most part. But there was just a grace [continued on page 76]

THE GREATEST COMIC BOOK EVER



(well...for this month at least)

"Atom" #12

Acquiring comic books is a bit difficult when you are eight. You know they are out there, you aren't exactly sure where they come from, you only know that they look really cool. For the longest time, my collection was limited to the largess of my parents. By the time I was eleven, I finally figured out a way to get comics on my own. Get a paper route! Before you can get a route you have to train for this entry into the working world. For a few years I would accompany other paperboys and help them. One of the guys that I would deliver with had a big pile of comics in the basement. Instead of cash, he would always give me five or six books, sometimes as many as ten. He figured out really quick that I loved DC, so he would make a Federal case out of giving me my hard earned due.

First, he would try and give me a pile of Harveys. I didn't care if there were 50 copies, I wasn't interested. Next up, he had some old westerns which I knew he was stealing from his older brother. He and his brother had a great scam going. He would give away his brother's comics to unsuspecting helpers. The next day, his brother would come to the helper's house to get them back by saying they were stolen! After I had turned down multiple copies of titles that I had no interest in, he would start with two DCs and see if he could get me to settle for fewer than the previously agreed amount.

Atom #12 came into my possession as part of a package deal for five Harveys, three westerns and something from a company called Charlton. It was the only DC I got that day. I was being paid for a Saturday delivery and the *Cleveland Press* was always really thin that day, so he didn't feel that he owed me that

much. It didn't matter; I knew I still got the best of him. I had an *Atom* that was two years old! The cover was boring, but it promised a great story inside. I loved time travel and I knew that The Atom Time Pool stories were always good. This one promised Edgar Allan Poe!

The cover didn't turn out to be that boring. The Atom was trapped inside a

gun! Talk about an unusual villain! What happens when you make the hero the villain? This is a pretty common plot device—if you check out most long running comics or television shows, they all use it at least once. How many of their writers were skilled enough to not only turn the hero into the villain, but also make him the weapon of destruction that is used to

commit the crime? Gardner Fox had the skill. He took a universally basic plot and added a really fun and original twist. It starts right on the cover. The Atom is trapped inside a ray gun that is channeling his dwarf-star-matter-energy into a ray that can crack the hardest of safes.

It is common knowledge that the respected editor of DC's Silver Age, Julie Schwartz, and whomever he was working with at the time, would come up

with a cover image and then they would have the writer construct his story around that cover image. This is an amazing way to work. It really puts the writer to the test. It is a test that Gardner Fox would pass every time.

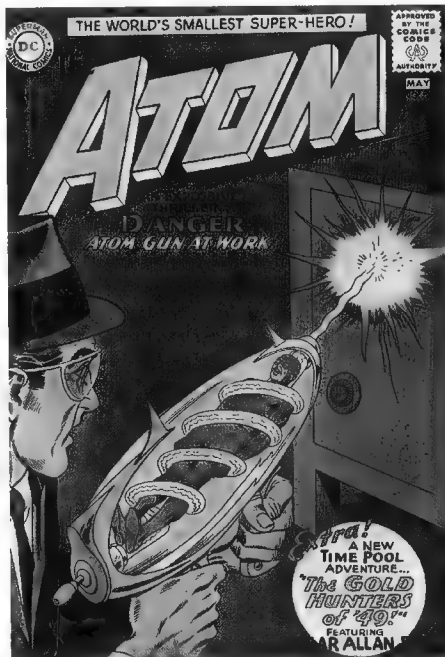
Stylistically, it is actually a very simple cover. By comic book standards, it is not really crowded. There are no really bright colors. As a matter of fact,

the background is gray, one of the drabest, most boring colors possible. The safe is a lighter shade of gray and, over on the far left, the thief is barely visible. He is in a muted brown hat and coat. His green tie doesn't even stand out. When you first see the cover, your eyes automatically go looking for the action and are initially drawn to the bright spot on the cover.

Towards the

right edge, above the center of the book, there is a yellow burst of energy that is striking the safe's door. When your eyes trace the bolt back to its point of origin, it is only then that you realize The Atom is trapped and he is actually the power source.

Gil Kane has pulled a nice trick on us. We see The Atom a fraction of a second after we realize what is going on. That tiny, one millisecond delay adds to the surprise of seeing The Atom as the



source of power. A further examination of the cover makes you change the way you are looking at the incident—it is the look in The Atom's eyes that begins to make us think he is not doing this of his own free will. At the very least, he is obviously in shock. Kane gives the man a genuine look of both terror and pain.

The splash page doesn't have a fancy science fiction-based villain in a caped costume. Instead, it is just a guy in a suit coat and a tie! In the Silver Age, bank robbers didn't look the way they do today. They were a lot better dressed. They took some pride in their appearance. They may have been going somewhere to steal other people's hard earned cash, but they were going to look good in the process. It is one thing to be robbed by someone wearing a hooded sweatshirt and some baggy jeans (or even a President mask), it is another thing entirely to be robbed by someone wearing a nice hat and a sports jacket with a tie.

Sitting behind the garage at my parents', I had started the book. Even though I desperately wanted to read the Time Pool story, it is important to read a comic book in the order it is written. I started with the cover story that opens the book.

The opening panel is a visit by Jean Loring to the office of Ray Palmer. They end up going out to dinner with a colleague of Ray's who happens to be a very good looking Italian scientist named Enrichetta Negrini. Inspired by the success of her fellow Italian, Enrico Fermi, she had come to America to work at the University. (The seeds of Palmer's failed marriage are planted 30 years before it happens. In the last panel of



intelligence and his dwarf-star powers. The story turned out to be better than I thought it would be. Now, it was on to the Time Pool adventure!

Of all the time travel stories that I enjoyed in the comics, I was always happiest with The Atom's. When Batman was hypnotized, it just didn't cut it with me. The adventures were fun, but come on, he's *hypnotized!* Superman could fly so fast that he could go back in time, but he was still Superman. The way The Atom went back in time seemed real. There was something about lowering a miniature man on a magnet through a swirl of colors that I believed.

There is a nice touch to the Time Pool stories. The scientist has to sit there like a fisherman as he lowers the magnet through the time warp. He has to be patient in order to get something from the past. For all the science that surrounds him, the Professor has to rely on one of the world's oldest tools, a fisherman's rod and string.

The way Fox wrote it made me think that time travel was scientifically feasible. Someone could actually build this Time Pool! It was something that could be accomplished in my world, in

page two, Jean is sitting there feeling completely left out as the two scientists are talking shop).

When he returns to the office, he interrupts a burglar. Eventually, the crook turns The Atom into a weapon and decides to rob banks. He is eventually foiled by a combination of The Atom's

my lifetime. It was feasible that I could someday have access to one of these machines. Then I could go back in time and refuse the Harveys I accepted on the first day I worked as a paperboy!

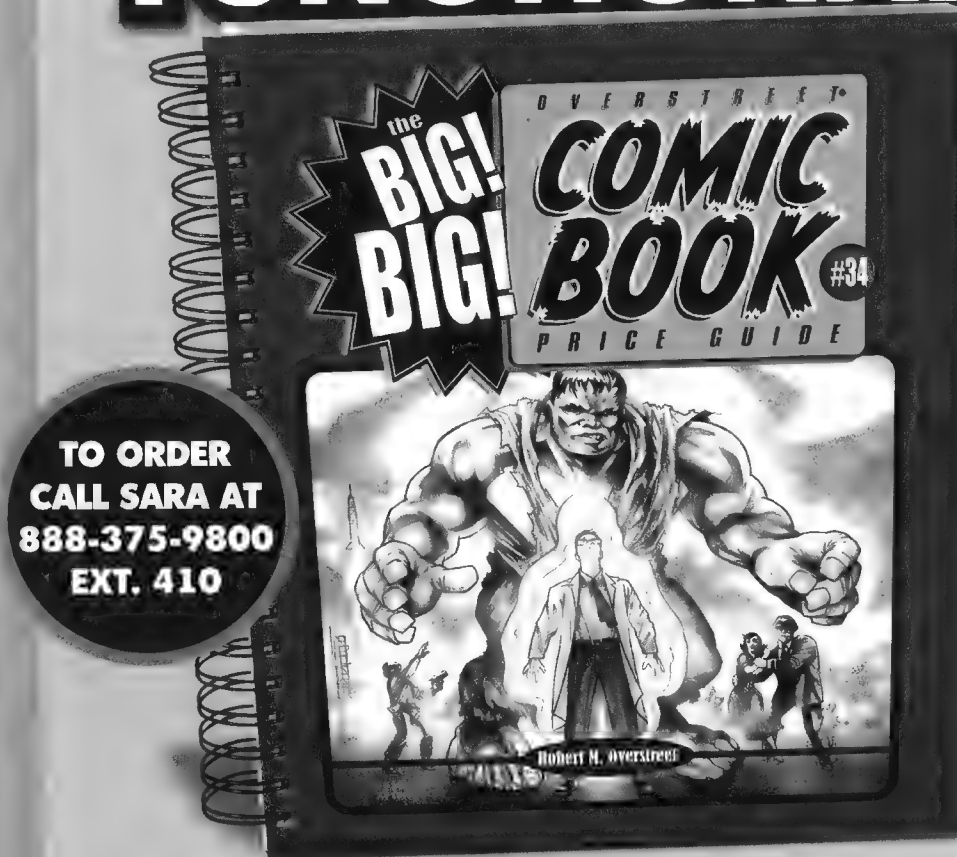
There are two story lines inside this 12-page delight. The first finds The Atom searching for a missing page inside a scientific book he is researching, and the second involves some missing gold, and introduces Edgar Allen Poe.

While searching for the missing page, The Atom encounters a couple of burglars—well dressed, of course. They are looking for some Shakespearean folios that would make them rich for life. He foils the robbery attempt and then doubles back to help Edgar Allen Poe solve the robbery. Needless to say, Poe comes through and figures everything out. It is then that The Atom springs into action. As Poe fights the criminals, The Atom lends an invisible hand.



The story was worth all the papers I had to carry. It worked on every level. I believed the Time Travel and I solved the crime just as The Atom had. As I sat behind the garage, I realized that I had really taken this older kid for a lot more than he thought. There was no way that he could understand and appreciate such a fantastic set of stories. On top of that, I still had the westerns. Since I didn't want to reread The Atom again so quickly, I figured I might as well read something about this guy named "Two Gun Kid." It looked more interesting than the other westerns I had seen. ☹️

FLIPPABLE! FACTUAL! FUNCTIONAL!



The Incredible Hulk and Incredible Hulk #1 comic image © 2003 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved.

It's **The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide #34** in a special limited edition! Featuring a stunning re-creation of Jack Kirby's cover for *Incredible Hulk #1* by John K. Snyder III (*Green Lantern: Brightest Day/Darkest Night*), this edition contains only the pricing, Top Ten charts, selected glossary and text from the regular edition of the *Guide*.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Stay-Flat Spiral Binding ▼ Larger Print ▼ Room For Notes ▼ A Must For Serious Collectors

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eBAY:

The Collector's Alternative

Editor's note: If you are an experienced eBay, the information in this article is not really meant for you. I know quite a few old-timers who have not yet used eBay for buying and selling collectibles, and this introductory article is for them.

-RC

by Paul Wardle

A few years ago, a new comic book convention came to town. Well, okay, not just to one town, and not just about comic books, and not really a convention either. But imagine walking into a comic book convention so vast that you couldn't see it all, with dealers from every corner of the globe. No, not the San Diego Con.

If you had been smart enough to buy stock in eBay when it first went on the market, you would have made a bundle. It has taken the world of collectibles by storm. It caters to rich investors and poverty-stricken fans alike. Both the obsessive collector and casual reader can find practically anything they want on eBay, provided they learn a few simple rules and, like any transaction, let the buyer beware. Though there are dozens of categories of treasures to go through, here at *Comic Book Marketplace* we are concerned with comic books and related collectibles, and I intend to provide an overview, as someone who has bought and sold on eBay off and on for a few years. For the uninitiated, eBay is an Internet auction house—the most popular of them all. Though you don't have to have your own computer to participate, you have to have access to a computer,

and someone who knows how to use it. Personally, I know as much about computers as Fredric Wertham knew about comic art. So if I can learn this stuff, I'm sure anyone can. Don't for a minute think this article is going to be filled with technical jargon or computer terms. I barely know any.

TIPS FOR THE NEW BUYER/SELLER

It is quite easy to register as an eBay bidder or seller or both. You need a credit card, and of course you'll need an Internet server you can depend on, because once you start participating in auctions, you have to be able to check on them frequently, and you'll need to pay attention to your e-mails. A high speed connection and lots of memory will help you sell successfully, and as a bidder, if you have to wait a long time for each auction to load up when you click on it, you will quickly become frustrated. To register, you will have to go online at the eBay site and fill out a form by typing in information about yourself, your address, credit card numbers, etc. I won't go into this in detail except to say that some people have a problem giving their credit card or other personal information to an unknown entity. You will have to take the chance, although with hundreds of thousands of customers, I haven't heard of any horror stories so far connected with privacy issues. Still, any time you give out this kind of information, you have to trust the safe-guards installed by that site, and in this case, I believe eBay's to be as safe as possible. They are a professionally run corporation. However, getting someone on the phone is difficult. Most eBay transactions and

administration functions are handled online, and this is something hard to get used to if you're not computer-savvy and like to see people you do business with face to face.

Once you have filled out the form, you will have to wait a day or so to find out if you have been accepted. They do a credit check, and if you pass, you will be notified by e-mail that you are now free to bid or sell. If you are a seller, you should have a computer scanner. You can scan the cover, back cover or interior pages of a comic or magazine, or a photo of some three dimensional collectible, turn it into a jpeg and show it with your auction page. Sellers who have no scan to show usually don't get many bids, so it is definitely worth the investment. A file transfer program is also helpful, as it allows you to access your own website (if you have one) and include pictures that are much larger than if you use eBay's system. Still, even with eBay's picture service (which is free unless you want to add more than one picture) the scan shown is big enough for most things (original art being an exception). If you are selling something, remember that you are expecting someone you don't know to give you money, and for that, they are assuming you actually have the item you have listed. If you don't have a scan in your auction, they have less faith in you as a businessman. They can't see the condition of the cover, or that it is the right issue number. They can't be sure you haven't made a mistake in the title, number or grade of the comic. And believe me, with many of these amateur sellers, or people who have come into a collection of comics they know nothing

about, this is always a possibility. Sellers must also include a description of their item. This description should include (especially in the case of comic books) as much information as they can provide. It should detail defects in the condition, a grade (the *Overstreet Grading Guide* has detailed grading tips for those who aren't pros), the publisher, number of pages and any artists or writers that collectors would conceivably be looking for. Above the description, there is a title line, where the seller arranges the few words that will attract buyers to that auction. This is the first thing people will see when looking through the lists of comic books (of which there are many subcategories). Sellers will often try to get your attention with words like RARE or CGC NM 9.4 (for slabbed books). Unfortunately, some sellers have a different idea of what's rare than I do. Sellers of comics should make sure they look through every page for possible defects, especially if it's something they've had for a long time and haven't looked at lately, or something that was once owned by someone who didn't care about looking after their possessions.

As a bidder, if you want to find comic books you will have to first click on "search," or you can browse selected categories. You might not want to have to wade through hundreds of thousands of auctions, so you might click on only westerns, or only Bronze Age, or only comic books in magazine size, and these categories cut down dramatically the amount of auctions that will present themselves to you. Comic books are a subcategory listed under "collectibles," and then you can get more specific if you want. You can also type in words that will lead you to even more specific titles. You might type in HULK or SUPERMAN #1 or JACK KIRBY or FICTION HOUSE. You might have a lot of interests and select "any of these words" after typing in some key words, or you might want to select "exact phrase" and type in WALLY WOOD. If you were to just type in WOOD, in all categories, you would likely get tens of thousands of auctions for things like

woodworking books, wood stoves, wood frame houses, furniture and picture frames. But if you select only "collectibles" and "exact phrase," then type in WALLY WOOD, you will get comics and related collectibles with art by the great comic book artist. This is the kind of thing that a successful bidder learns by trial and error.

New bidders are like kids in a candy store. You may have been looking for a certain collectible for 20 years and not found even one, then find five of them on eBay the first time you check. It's hard not to go crazy at first if you have the collector mentality and some extra cash to spend. Of course you won't win everything you bid for, but you can still go through a lot of money very quickly. However, I'm not here to lecture you about managing your finances. That's your problem. If you're bidding on Marvel super-hero comics, chances are, you'll find plenty to choose from no matter what issue you're looking for. And there will be more auctions every week. So you don't have to bid high on the first one you see. The patient can sometimes find a better copy for less money than they were going to spend, by waiting a few months, or just days.

Despite the fact that you never know when new bidders will be searching a particular item, or what their collections are lacking, there are some items so obscure that you may find yourself only bidding against three other people—the only three other people in the world who want what you want. Therefore, if you get beaten out, sometimes the next copy of that book that goes up on eBay will only have you and two other people bidding. And it is likely to go for less money each time. It was within the last couple of years that eBay added the Buy It Now feature, whereby a seller can offer the item only for sale, or auction it off, but still give a bidder the opportunity to pay considerably more than the minimum bid but ensure that he/she gets it, by agreeing to use Buy It Now, thereby shutting down the auction and eliminating the possibility of other bidders.

When bidding, you enter a maximum bid and must again provide your password before that bid can be accepted. If the item is currently at five dollars and you bid \$100.00 as your maximum, the auction will only raise the current bid up to \$5.50. If no one else bids, you still get it for \$5.50, despite the fact that you were willing to pay \$100.00. A seller does not know the amount of your maximum bid during an auction, unless it is also the high bid against all other bidders. Now, I'm not going to give away all my bidding secrets in print. I may be bidding against some of you some day. But the most important thing to remember before bidding is to read the terms of the auction carefully. If you live outside the U.S. make sure the seller will ship to you. Read the description of the item thoroughly to make sure it is what you really want. And check the seller's feedback rating.

FEEDBACK

Each bidder or seller has a user ID code, and next to that a number in brackets—for example: ECFAN (568). Following the number will be a star (unless the number is less than 10), of various colors—yellow if the rating is 10-49, blue if it is 50-99, turquoise/green for 100-499, purple for 500-999 and red for a thousand or more. Higher up there are other colors and added icons next to the rating. This number is known as the bidder or seller's feedback rating, and the higher the number, the more successful transactions this member has taken part in. On each auction there is a link to click on to get to the feedback forum, and either the buyer or seller can leave feedback about that particular transaction. As a courtesy, most people leave positive feedback. It is not advisable to leave negative feedback unless you are really upset, and there is no other recourse. The etiquette involved is to refund the buyer's money if not satisfied, and many would rather reach an agreement than spoil their perfect feedback rating. A third alternative is to

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The Ghost of Al Capp: The Milton Story Story

by Chris Boyko

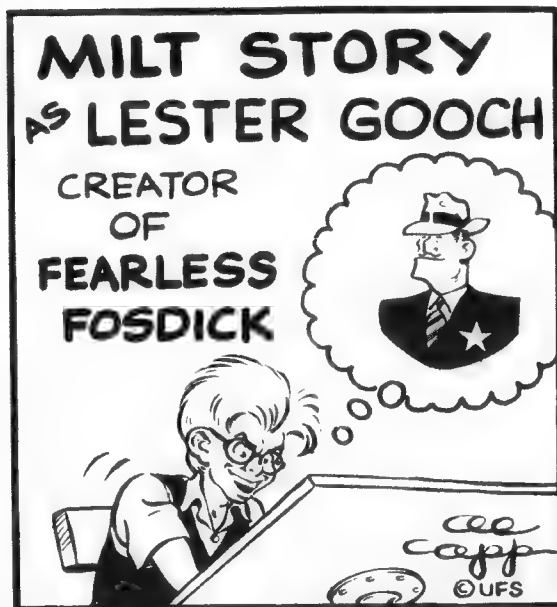
If you mention the name "Li'l Abner" to the average Joe or Jane on the street, chances are that anyone who remembers the strip also remembers its flamboyant and outspoken creator, Al Capp. Although the strip has been gone from newspapers for 27 years and Capp himself gone for 25, it is not an exaggeration to say that *Li'l Abner* is one of the most fondly remembered comic strips of all time and still holds an important place in the popular culture after all these years.

But Al Capp was not the only creative force behind *Abner's* success, although he brought the idea of the hillbilly strip with him from his tenure working for Ham Fisher on *Joe Palooka*. A variety of people worked hard behind the scenes to make the strip come to life, but by and large they never received any credit.

The most famous of Capp's ghosts is, of course, Frank Frazetta, who worked for Capp in the late 1950s and produced some of the most pulchritudinous ladies ever seen in the environs of Dogpatch. But might I suggest that the more important of Capp's assistants was one who immediately preceded Frazetta: Milton Story. It is his "story" that has remained untold, despite his incredibly important contribution to the look of some of Capp's most famous creations, both on the printed page and off.

Milton (or Milt) Story was born Milton Schwartz in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 21, 1914, but his parents moved him to California at a young age. He drew cartoons all through high school, but his first job was decidedly non-artistic: working for a potato chip factory putting salt on the chips. Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, he developed an allergy to the salt which made him break out in hives. As he had always enjoyed drawing, it was at this point that he decided to become a cartoonist, as the job couldn't possibly be worse than salting chips. So the plucky teenager packed up his little portfolio and headed where any self-respecting person with an interest in cartooning would go: straight to the Walt Disney Studio.

Milt, not being versed in such matters, did not understand



Milt Story is Lester Gooch, the oddball creator of Fearless Fosdick. If there was any doubt about who Gooch was modeled after, it is here laid to rest.

he showed up at Disney, his job was indeed waiting! Milt worked for Disney for several years on storyboarding short cartoons during the mid-to-late 1930s.

The reason Milt did not stay with Disney longer is that he always had a dream of creating his own successful comic strip. To this end, he even changed his name to Milt Story in the early 1940s, for the easy byline it provided. This would later prove an auspicious choice when shortly thereafter he married Mollian Dyme, a Canadian artist of some renown, as she took to calling herself Mollian Dyme-Story! Milt knew that the longer he stayed with Disney, the farther he was getting from his dream of syndication. So when the offer of a steady income came his way in 1944 from King Features to work in the art department on a variety of strips as a general "ghost of all trades," he packed up his family and talents and moved to New York to be closer to the world of comic strips. While at King, he began developing his own strip in his spare time while working on other people's ideas for salary. Unfortunately, there is no record of exactly what he worked on while at King Features. Meanwhile, his wife began to develop her own project, one which Milt no doubt approved of.

As luck would have it, two of Milt's children were born on the same day in 1946: his daughter Vida and his creation *Sunny Cal*. *Cal* was a panel cartoon very much in the style of *Dennis the Menace*, which it predated by several years. *Sunny Cal* was

that you did not just show up at Disney studios without an appointment, even in the early 1930s. But Milt didn't have opportunity to be turned away, as on approach he saw Walt leaving with some buddies to go play polo. Milt was also not aware that you did not speak to Walt Disney without an appointment either, so he did just that. Disney was impressed (no doubt by Milt's temerity as much as his portfolio), and asked Milt if he was out of high school. When Milt replied "no," Walt said that if Milt went and finished high school, there would be a job waiting for him at Disney Studios when he came back. Milt, now armed with a mandate from a higher power, did finish high school and when

syndicated but, as you might guess from the name, it was primarily seen only in southern California papers, and Milt did not achieve the level of success that he had hoped for.

Although *Cal* did not bring Milt success, his solid work at King Features meant that it did not take long for his skills to become noticed by Al Capp, who offered him the position of Art Director of Al Capp Enterprises in 1948. Al Capp Enterprises did not actually physically exist when Milt was hired! Milt started with an empty office at 17 East 45th St. in New York City and had to build the company from the ground up. One person Milt hired early on was a just-married man much in need of a job named Mel Lazarus (later famed for both *Miss Peach*, which started in 1957, and *Momma*, beginning in 1970). If not for Milt's recognition of Mel's talents and giving him that critical first break in the comic field, who can honestly say whether these two beloved American strips would have ever been created? Mel was not the only cartoonist who thought highly of Milt as his friends included such notable cartoonists as Milt Gross and Edwina (creator of *Tippie*).

As Art Director of Al Capp Enterprises, Milt would go on to design over 500 *Li'l Abner*, *Shmoo* and *John Wayne* products for national manufacturers. He would also work on the comic book side of the Capp empire from 1949, when Toby Press (a part of Al Capp Enterprises) took over publication of *Li'l Abner* from Harvey Comics, until Toby shut down in 1955. Capp was the ultimate authority on all matters pertaining to the *Abner* strip (although he was less involved in the comic book side) and came down from Boston to New York every week or so to give his approval on ideas. John Wayne also took a personal interest in the comic books bearing his name, to the point of instructing Milt that he wanted "no sissy colors" in his comics "like Roy Rogers has."

As well as being Art Director, Milt was also the official signer for Al Capp; this meant that he had to sign Capp's name to nearly everything. On one occasion, after signing dozens of



Adam Bumm was a humorous space strip that never made it off the ground, although a couple of stories did appear in the back of *Li'l Abner Comics* from Toby in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This page is a sample collage designed to sell the strip to a syndicate.

copies of *The Life and Times of the Shmoo*, he tried to cash his check at the bank, but when the teller tried to match his signature to the one on file, she could not. He had accidentally signed his own name but in Al Capp's style!

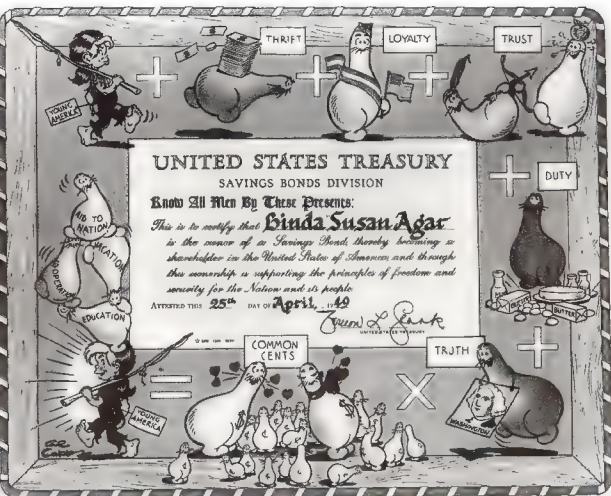
But what did Milt Story do for *Li'l Abner*? We know that he did ghosting work on the strip, as there are photographs of him at work on original art pieces, but exactly how much he did is still a mystery. However, a list of the timeless characters for which he is known to have done much of the drawing is sufficient to shine a spotlight on him as it was Milt Story who helped visualize those immortal Capp creations of *The Kigmy*, *Fearless Fosdick* and, most iconic of all, *The Shmoo*!

The Kigmys were squat little fellows whose sole purpose in life was to take one in the backside from all those frustrated humans who had some kicking to do. Tired of the way your boss treats you? Kick a Kigmy! While these comical little fellows (with a none-too-subtle point to make about human behavior) did not attain the lofty status of the Shmoos, they did get a fair bit of exposure in the late 1940s and early 1950s and even had several toys (suitable for kicking of course) and even a lamp (not kickable) produced in their likeness. There is no doubt that Milt Story was the primary designer of these toys. Milt was a man proud of his accomplishments, even those done under a work-for-hire basis.

Li'l Abner's comic strip hero *Fearless Fosdick* was perhaps the second most famous of Capp's creations, with this bumbling fool of a detective who shot everyone full of holes being a direct



John Wayne lays it on the line to Milt Story about those pastel Roy Rogers' color schemes.



The Shmoo-decorated United States Savings Bond Certificate from 1949, designed and drawn by Milt Story. Not an actual bond, but an incentive for kids to buy them.

parody of Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*. Fosdick was created in 1942 as the product of the unstable mind of fictitious cartoonist Lester Gooch, and appeared off and on throughout the run of *Abner* until its end in 1977. Gooch was named after *Tracy*'s Gould, obviously enough, but his visage (which appeared later in the strip than his name) was patterned after none other than Milt Story himself! Story was clearly in on the Fosdick concept during the formative years of its development and helped design many of the key visual features that made this strip-within-a-strip so popular. In 1951, he wrote and drew the promotional comic *Fearless Fosdick and the Case of the Red Feather*, for which he was credited with a rare byline.

The most famous character(s) which Milt had a direct creative hand on was that most utilitarian of creatures, the Shmoos, both good as pets and good eating! When the Shmoo characters started in *Li'l Abner* in late 1948, they were only in the strip for a couple of weeks. But in no time Milt was fending off manufacturers who saw dollar signs in Shmoo products of every imaginable shape and size. Milt was subsequently directed to design all of the assorted Shmoo characters (like Super Shmoo and J. Edgar Shmoover) for comic books as well as oversee the licensing of all Shmoomorabilia, including such items as "Lovable Shmoos with Mystic Shmoatomic Power," Shmoo clocks, Chocolate Shmoo pops (any of these around today? Yehhhh!), and Shmoo clothing bags. He drew the *Shmoo Comics*, as well as the other *Li'l Abner* books from Toby which were not strip reprints, and other Shmoo paper products like the Shmoo-themed Savings Bond. He also designed the comics as a whole and even added some of his own signed backup strips in some of the *Li'l Abner* comics.

Eventually, Milt tired of the daily grind of working on someone else's characters, even if they were popular ones. He still had a desire to work on his own projects and make a name for himself, and that was not going to happen working for Capp. The cancellation of all *Li'l Abner* comics and the end of Toby Press in 1955, probably spurred by declining sales and
[continued on page 58]

The Ghost of Al Capp: The Milton Story Story

"It's A Great Life Again" – Now That Eight More Promo Comics Have Been Found!

by Chris Boyko

One of the ways comic collectors expend their energy is by searching for that most elusive of all four-color creatures: the comic not listed in *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*! One of the most fertile areas for making discoveries of this type is in the area of Promotional Comics, where some of the weirdest and most hilarious (often unintentionally) concepts are turned into comics for "educational" purposes.

Recently, I had the good fortune to discover nine promotional comics from 1948-1951 in the files of the estate of Milton Story, long-time ghost for Al Capp on *Li'l Abner*. And, incredibly, eight of these are not listed in the *Guide*! And three have art by notable comic strip artists! A review of all the titles follows with comments on their overall readability and artistic qualities.

Al Capp's Fearless Fosdick and "The Case of the Red Feather" (Capp Enterprises Inc, 1951), no number, 4 pages (story and art by Milt Story). This book is the only one from
[continued on page 58]





Al Capp by Li'l Abner (1946) contained the story of Capp's early life and overcoming of his handicap. It was distributed by the Red Cross to amputation wards to inspire patients by Capp's success. Life magazine cited a hundred thousand copies printed, with foreign language editions published as well.

The 1950 Li'l Abner Comic Record, "Li'l Abner Goes to Town" with graphics and design by Story.

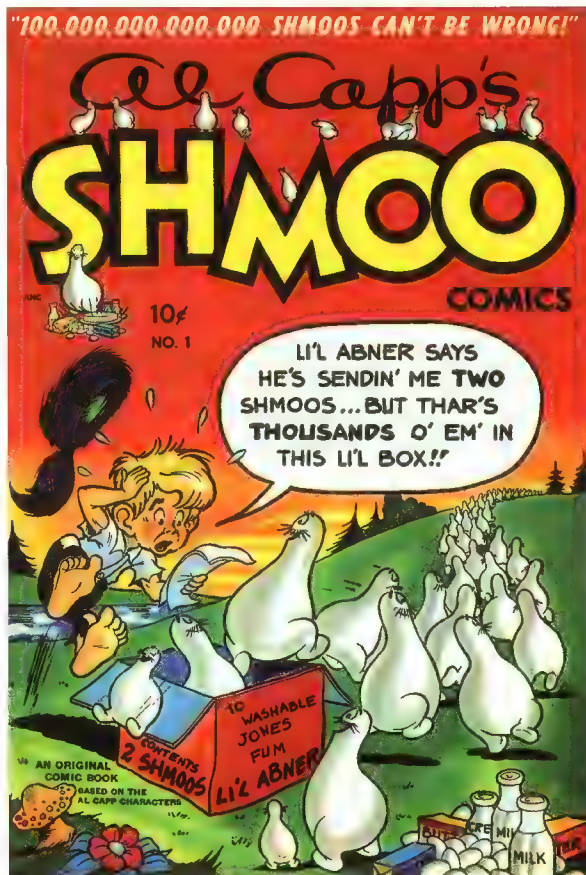


Not exactly a politically correct sentiment these days, but beautifully rendered by Milt as a small decal published in 1951.

Original 9"x12" cardboard Wildroot Cream Oil Sign featuring Fearless Fosdick with art likely by Story. Note real Al Capp pen signature in extreme lower right. The more familiar "official" Al Capp signature, as written by Milt Story, can be seen to the left of it!



The incredible inflatable Kigmy! This one is 6" tall but they also came in 11" and 24" versions produced by two different companies!



Original Captain Crunch artwork for a very early 1963 premium hand puppet along with the finished product. Milt Story designed many of the early Captain Crunch premiums.

The in-demand **Al Capp's Shmoo Comics** #1 (Jul 1949) from Toby Press. All-new interior art and design by Milt Story!

George Pratt:

Comics' Man of Many Talents

by Dan Johnson

Readers of Comic Book Marketplace will no doubt know George Pratt from his brilliant artwork that has been dazzling comic book fans since the late 1980s. Pratt first came to the attention of the comic book community when DC Comics published his ground-breaking graphic novel, *Enemy Ace: War Idyll*. The book was quickly hailed for its artwork, but also won acclaim because of the sensitive and insightful handling of the subject of war and what it does to soldiers on both sides during a conflict. The graphic novel went on to win numerous awards and even won a place on the required reading list at West Point.

Since the publication of *Enemy Ace: War Idyll*, Pratt has tackled more traditional comic book characters, such as Batman (in the *Harvest Breed* graphic novel) and Wolverine (in the *Netsuke* mini-series) where he again won over the critics and delighted his fans. Pratt explains his latest comic book project, *Solo*, released by DC Comics, as "[one] where each artist gets their own issue of 48 pages to tell short stories. We can jump genres and also play with various techniques from one story to the next. Only one of the stories has to be a DC character." No doubt *Solo* will be yet another feather in his cap.

The truly amazing thing, though, is the fact that the work Pratt has done in the comic book industry only scratches the surface of this multi-talented individual. Pratt's paintings have been featured in exhibits around the world and his work earned him the honor of being included in the book *The Illustrator in America 1860-2000*. His work has been featured on numerous covers for books from such prestigious companies as

Random House, Warner Books and Henry Holt, and he was chosen to illustrate Gabor Barabas' Find Me A Voice, a collection of poems concerning the Holocaust. Pratt's creativity even extends beyond his painting to writing, photography and film-making as well.

Comic Book Marketplace got the chance to recently sit down with Pratt to discuss the graphic novel that first brought him recognition with comic book fans, but we were also given the opportunity to explore some of the other creative outlets that make George Pratt the artist he is.



Comic Book Marketplace: Let's start with what inspired you to become a painter. Who were the artists that you admired when you were first discovering painting, both in and out of the world of comics?

George Pratt: Well, interestingly, though I was a huge Rembrandt and Frazetta fan, I was not moved by paintings as much as by line art originally. I was a total nut for Joe Kubert, Neal Adams, Jack Kirby, Carl Barks, Milton Caniff, Alex Toth, Bernie Wrightson, Jeff Jones, Michael Kaluta, Barry Smith, Craig Russell, etc. I basically learned how to draw by copying the work of those guys, struggling to learn how to make the lines they were making using brushes and dip pens. I did play around with painting a bit, mostly watercolor, but wanting to move into oils because of the Frazetta and Jeff Jones paintings which blew my mind. My mother had taken some painting classes and so the oils were lying around and I got into them a couple of times.

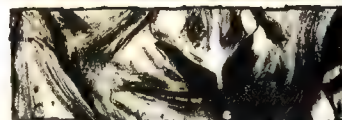
Disastrous. The stuff was all over the place and I had no clue what the hell I was doing. But I loved the smell of the stuff.

My parents were both admirers of art so I was supported in my desire. I also sort of think they hoped my wanting to be an artist was going to be a fad that would go the way of my GI Joe collection or something. It didn't, but to their credit they were behind me all the way, though nervous about the possibility of anyone making a living at art. My father's brother, my Uncle Joe, was a very accomplished pastel artist and painter, though he never pursued it as a career. He would come over during holidays and we'd sit by the fire and he'd draw me various literary characters, Sherlock Holmes and stuff.

My father pushed me to get interested in the Impressionists, his personal favorite being Pissarro. I just wasn't ready for that.



I was still too preoccupied with comics and the artists who were telling stories and all that. The thing that actually brought me to painting, in the end, was the Studio book, Jeff Jones art in particular. Jones' work was killing me and he became my grail at the time. I worked my ass off trying to attain some of the effects in his work, his line, his shapes, his color, etc. I was





aping his work to the hilt. Luckily, I finally got to meet him and go painting with him during my freshman year at Pratt. He sort of took Kent Williams and me under his wing and it was worth its weight in gold to see Jeff paint. Hell, for me it was like getting to sit at Rembrandt's shoulder while he cranked away.



So it was through Jeff that the larger world of art and painting opened up for me. Others' work did that for me when it came to line, Frazetta, Kaluta and Wrightson, among others. But Jeff opened the world of painting for me. I was already getting heated up over Sargent, Whistler, Klimt, Schiele, and others and Jeff helped stoke the fire.



CBM: It is apparent from looking over your website that you have a number of creative outlets (teaching, fiction writing, photography, film-making). What is it that draws you to painting? What do you feel you can express better through painting than through other creative outlets?

Pratt: Of course all the various things feed each other and are sort of oddly interchangeable as far as firing me up, though they each give something different. I can get lost on the computer with Photoshop and page layout, doing the film work, the writing and all that. But painting and drawing is immediate and tactile, it exercises the senses. And there's a much greater sense of accomplishment for me in the end, though writing pulls neck and neck there, making pictures with words.

But I think the reason painting is



© GEORGE PRATT

such a passion is because I have to truly struggle with it. I can sit down and draw and it is fairly intuitive, almost unconscious, same with watercolor. With oils I find that I'm having to make conscious decisions about composition, paint quality, color and mood. Like writing, it demands that I am truly there, no autopilot.

I think, too, the end product is one that is more contemplative in some ways for the viewer. I'm not that interested in putting forth some literal ideology or idea in paintings. That's why I enjoy writing. That's the place for those aspirations, at least for me. The paintings are vehicles for paint, a wonderful arrangement of color and line, tone, etc. I can throw ideas down on canvas, certainly, but they will ultimately be misinterpreted. No one will really get what I'm trying to say, and I think that's the way it should be. Hell, paintings are not words. Even when you write something entirely literal and obvious, it's misconstrued! So paintings allow people to come to them cold and take home what they will, whether it is what was intended or not. That's a beautiful communication, really. Pretty pure.

CBM: To kind of reverse the previous question, what do you feel you have gained from painting that you can bring to your other artistic endeavors?

Pratt: Well, a personal sense of color comes into play, how to manipulate it for my own purposes, to push a mood or a feeling. And lots of heart. Paintings, I believe, demand that you pour your heart into them, if they're to have any honesty and truth, and that, certainly, transfers over, I hope. Framing a scene, what's essential. Also, focus: how to direct the eye, and how to keep myself focused on the task at hand. I'm pretty flighty. I get distracted easily. So keeping my own





focus is essential, and painting does that for me. I feel most like an artist when I'm painting.

CBM: Let's discuss *Enemy Ace*: *War Idyll*. This was your first graphic novel and it was a great start for you in the industry. How did you come to create this story? What inspired this tale of two veterans from two different wars?

Pratt: *Ace* came about because of a pile of disparate elements, really, depending on how in-depth you want to get. I was born in 1960. The Vietnam War was cooking. I was playing guns with all my buddies, it was the game we played most. But I was having recurring nightmares that I was going to have to go. You have to remember that this thing went on a long time. My entire childhood always had the specter of Vietnam hanging over it. Body counts at dinnertime, neighborhood guys

leaving and never coming back, etc.

During that time I was also reading the Joe Kubert and Robert Kanigher *Sgt. Rock* Haunted Tank stories, and *Enemy Ace*. I loved those books. I was a total war geek as a kid, as were all my buddies. It was the thing to do in Texas at that time. Audie Murphy was a Texan and our hero and WWII was what it was all about, all our dads having been in the war and all.

Jump to my getting out of art school: I'm reading tons of literature about Vietnam with the aim of trying to understand it, to try and give some substance to my fears as a kid. I had heard that Harris Publications was going to revive *Creepy* and *Eerie* and so I went there to try and get on board. I was turned down for that work, but luckily had a couple of war pieces in my portfolio that I'd done, Vietnam pieces. The guy I was speaking to asked if I'd be interested in doing that kind of work. I said yes and was introduced to Jim Morris, who is now one of the experts for the History Channel. He was in charge of editing a magazine called *Eagle*, a sort of *Soldier of Fortune* thing for Harris. Jim was a three-tour green beret in Vietnam, and a published author of some science-fiction novels, as well as his own memoir about Vietnam called *War Diary*. He loved the work and





hired me on the spot. The magazine came out every other month but Jim gave me work every month, kept me busy and in rent money. My usual workload was a full-color painting and several pen and inks illustrating stories by authors who had been in Vietnam, though the stories would be about other wars as well. I could generally do whatever I wanted. I was sort of his pet artist. He even let me come into the offices and use their phones to call writers/Nam vets and talk to them about their experiences. Very cool.

This is about the time, too, that all the movies about Vietnam started to ramp up and hit the mainstream. After illustrating all these stories, and reading various books, I began to feel that I wanted to tell my own story about the war. And for some reason *Enemy Ace* popped into my head. I had never studied WWI or had any particular interest in it. But I saw it as a way to compare and contrast the two wars, a way to give the story more

scope, show that things haven't changed all that much between wars.

My first attack on the story was pretty much a watered down Kanigher story, somewhat a glorification of the war and all that. Not the direction I really wanted the story to go. This was also something I was just playing with. I had not approached DC at all about this. It was just an idea, a play toy for me. At the time I was making trips to upstate New York to visit J. Muth and help him on *Moonshadow*. It was working on that book that convinced me that I could paint an entire comic. We were working on hellacious deadlines and had to basically do a whole issue on a weekend or so. Crazy. But we were able to do it. Great times!

Anyway, this gave me the confidence to tackle something of my own. So *Ace* became this sort of pet project that I goofed around with for about a year or two. I kept turning it this way and that, molding it and dreaming about it, and

sketching like a nut on it. I began to research the First World War, reading various diaries and histories. I've never been a history buff so my delving into all this was sort of surprising to me. I totally found myself immersed in it all, loving every minute of it. It was invigorating.

I visited museums, old aerodromes, etc. I was lucky enough to speak with a couple of veterans of WWI and their stories were gut-wrenchingly honest and immediate. I built models of the airplanes, which was fun, like being a kid again. One of them was a large kit from Japan that took me something like four months to build. It's an exact replica of the Fokker Triplane, down to the little nails to put it all together. A beautiful model. I watched all the old movies: *Blue Max*, *Hell's Angels*, *Dawn Patrol*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (both the Lew Ayres version from the '20s and the Hallmark remake starring Ernest Borgnine and Richard Thomas), *Galipoli*, *Paths of Glory*, *Farewell to*

Arms. Anything visual was quite sought after by me. Photographs were fairly hard to come by. It was a snap to stumble onto piles and piles of WWII reference, but WWI was practically



nonexistent. Now I have a pretty dense library of material. I was lucky enough, years after I'd done the book, to be

able to buy George Woodbridge's collection of WWI books, including the complete original *New York Times Pictorials* from that era. Wonderful books.

But the sketchbooks really took over my life. I filled two large sketchbooks, which later became the book that Kevin Eastman published through Tundra called *No Man's Land*. In them I tried to learn how the clothes worked, how different the people seemed to be and the visual mood. I was less concerned with details and more concerned with mood and the spirit of those times.

Herb Trimpe took me up in his WWII Stearman bi-plane so that I would have a true feeling for what those pilots experienced. It was exciting. I bought many of the helmets, and made do with coats that were similar to the real things. I basically found myself being sucked into the First World War, and have not been able to shake it since. I still find myself presented with stories in my head about that war. It's very deeply imbedded in me now. There's an artist in Texas that firmly believes I died in the trenches back then. Who knows? But I'm still



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working on material dealing with that war. I've been writing on a large WWI epic that I'd like to do, only comic publishers don't seem very interested.

CBM: At the time *Enemy Ace* saw



© MARVEL COMICS



print, painted comics were really just starting to take off in the industry and I would have to say that this graphic novel was one of the first projects to help show just how well a painted book could be done. I'm curious to know what DC thought of the graphic novel when you first brought the project to them. Were they excited about the book and do you think they realized how important it would become?

Pratt: DC jumped at the project. It was crazy, really. Here was something that was about a character that most people, other than die-hard fans and professionals, had forgotten. And here, also, was a young artist that had a few small credits from black and white work in *Heavy Metal*, looking to do a fully-painted 128-page graphic novel. But they went for it. And they were behind the book the whole way. It was a wonderful experience. Andy Helfer was the editor I saw originally, thanks to Scott Hampton. Scott had been coming up to visit for years and always enjoyed seeing what I was up to, and Scott is also my sounding board for writing and dialogue and the things that matter with storytelling. But he was getting tired of me just playing with this thing. He was continually pushing me to take it in to DC and make it happen. I was too chicken, basically. I was afraid of the rejection, I think. As long as I was playing it was always a possibility, you know? Anyway, he came to visit once and called me from Rick Bryant's studio and asked me to bring the work I'd done so far over. When I arrived, Scott grabbed the portfolio and headed out the door. "If you want to be at DC when this stuff hits you better follow me!" And he took off. I followed. He got to DC and had them get hold of Andy, who took us back into the offices and looked at the work. Andy was all over it! It was pretty heady. He grabbed Dick Giordano and they began talking contracts. It was scary too. Here this thing was now real! The reality of what was happening slammed into me, a cold blast in the face. I was going to have to put up or shut up!

The other thing that DC was very patient with was my being so damn persnickety and slow in doing all the work. I

was putting a lot of time into the panels and lavishing all kinds of attention to the atmosphere and all, and they didn't really push me too hard to hurry up and finish it. They were really great throughout it all.

One of the joys of working on this project was getting to meet Joe Kubert. Joe was one of my gods and he was incredibly supportive and generous with his time. He let me pick his brain about storytelling, especially as it applies to making these planes feel like they're flying. It was surprising to me just how hard it was to get them to sit comfortably on the page and get across a true feeling of flight, very difficult. They ended up becoming sort of abstract exercises in composition, really. But it was a real dream come true to meet Joe. I'd spent so much of my childhood loving up on his *Tarzan* and *Sgt. Rock* comics. The fantastic thing about comics is that you do get to meet your heroes, and I've been fortunate enough to meet most of mine. I also got to meet George Evans and that was great as well. We totally hit it off and enjoyed discussing "the old kites" as George liked to call them. George was a true historian of WWI aviation and had written many articles for some of the WWI Aero history journals like *Over the Front*.

Another silent partner on this book was Willie Schubert, the



© MARVEL COMICS

letterer for the book. He did a fantastic job and the lettering totally complemented the art.

CBM: The original *Enemy Ace* series had somewhat of a cult-status when it was first published in the 1960s. This feature, like many of DC's war comics, has a strong following among military buffs. It also has a strong following among aviation fans as well. I'm curious to know what the reaction was to the graphic novel by these fans when it first appeared. I can imagine you easily won many of them over.

Pratt: The book did very well and fans seemed to really appreciate it. What was nice was that mostly adults were reacting to it. People who had never read comics before were writing me and telling me that the story moved them to tears and things like that. Old veterans from WWII and Vietnam wrote to tell me that the story deeply affected them and that it helped them to deal with their own pasts. That was most gratifying of all, seeing how deeply people were affected by the story.

I remember as a kid reading Toth's "Daddy and the Pie" story in *Creepy* and *Eerie* and just sitting there on the sofa crying over the wonderful combination of words and pictures. And I remember thinking at the time how powerful comics can be. That to me was a goal, to be able to move people in that way. That was an accomplishment, and the true power of art. So the letters and stories I received were wonderful in that regard.

I did a signing tour through Germany with Scott Hampton back then and it was nice to see the reaction over there to the book. Again, people were very emotional about their enjoyment of the story and the art. I met one woman who was doing her Master's Thesis on the book. That was freaky. She was asking all sorts of pointed political questions that I was basically ill equipped to answer. The book was political, certainly, in its anti-war stance, but I was particularly not interested in getting into the politics of those wars. I was more interested in dealing with the human emotions of those two characters caught up in the wartime Niagara of their respective eras. Vietnam doesn't mean a lot to them over there and the only way I could get her to understand what it meant to Americans was to remind her how immediate WWII was to her country. She understood that. I also had people stop by the tables and give me old postcards from their grandparents mailed from the trenches of WWI. Pretty wild.

CBM: *Enemy Ace: War Idyll* has the distinction of having been on the required reading list at West Point. What was your reaction when you learned about that?

Pratt: I was sort of shocked and gratified at the same time. I wondered if they really got the point. It was an anti-war book, but not an anti-soldier book. I hoped that they were focusing on the need for these people to be able to deal with their experiences.

[continued on page 64]



EARTH VS. FLY

...IN THE COMICS!

by Will Murray

When pilot Kenneth Arnold reported the first modern flying saucers over Washington's Mount Rainier in 1947, he kicked off a national craze. Saying, "They flew like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water," Arnold accidentally gave the press a handy gift. From this, they coined the term flying saucer. From there, the phenomenon of the Unidentified Flying Object snowballed.

Most crazes fade. But in the early years of the 1950s, the craze turned into a genuine hysteria. Blame it on the Reds, the Cold War, rampant McCarthyism, or an occultation of the moon, but instead of going the way of the hula hoop and other postwar cultural blips, fly-

ing saucers became a prolonged scare.

For maybe five years after Arnold's famous encounter with the unknown, people were seeing strange shiny blips in the sky that defied accepted standards of aeronautics. UFOs buzzed Washington, DC and were captured on film. Air Force and other governmental entities scrambled to intercept and explain—some suspected to explain away—every single sighting as something mundane like stray weather balloons and misunderstood planets.

Front cover art for *UFO Flying Saucers #1* (Western Publishing Co. 1968).



ING SAUCERS...

It was the first flying saucer flap, and comic books embraced it like a returning child. At first, the industry used UFOs as plot fodder. Avon's *Flying Saucers* wasn't even about aliens from outer space, but beings from Earth's ancient past. And Fawcett's *Vic Torrey and his Flying Saucer* was pure SF fantasy.

Leave it to Bill Gaines and the madmen of EC Comics to grab the extraterrestrial by the antenna and milk it for all it was worth. *Weird Science* #2 (Jul/Aug 1949) led off with an unusual Al Feldstein cautionary tale called "The Flying Saucer Invasion." Told in semi-documentary style, it begins when farmer Judson Latcher reports an alien spacecraft over Kansas. A second sighting in—of all places—Roswell, New Mexico lends credibility to the first. As the story unfolds, others see strange stuff in the sky and various authorities react. One psychologist says, "The flying saucer is mass hysteria brought about by post-war insecurity and economic anxiety! It is obviously a pathological illusion aggravated by continuous publicity given it by press, radio, and COMIC BOOKS..."

Obviously, there was some editorializing going on here. And it doesn't stop there. The secretary of the Air Force is shown

denouncing all sightings as "Poppycock!" And when the Secretary of Defense summons witnesses to the phenomena, one by one, he pokes tiny holes in their stories and their credibility.

In the end, UFOs are swept under an official rug. Then in typical EC twist-ending style, a pair of astronomers at Mount Palomar look up into near space and see..."FLYING SAUCERS! THOU-

SANDS OF THEM! Streaking towards Earth! They'll be here...soon...in a matter of HOURS..."

Although no one knew it at the time, this was a seminal story in what might be called the Flying Saucer sub-genre of comics. Names, dates and circumstances were altered—Kenneth Arnold's kickoff sighting was replaced by the Kansas farmer's account—but Feldstein was clearly weaving fact with fiction to achieve an unusual four-color effect.

EC returned to the Flying Saucers theme several times, but they broke new ground with a Wally Wood tale called "Flying Saucer Report" in *Weird Science-Fantasy* #25 (Sep 1954) which incorporates several authentic UFO reports, starting with Kenneth Arnold's seminal sighting, into a typical EC tale about a saucer scribe named Frank E. Keely whose human appearance masks the fact that he is really a Martian come to prepare Earthmen for a coming friendly invasion of his fellow Red Planet refugees determined to flee a dying Mars. The reporter to whom he spills his story refuses to believe him. The story sounds lame, and it is. It's a send-up of Hollywood entertainment reporter Frank Scully, who wrote the first book on the subject, *Behind the Flying Saucers*.

Evidently, UFO fever took hold of Gaines and his staff because they took their flirtation with saucers to the next level when they issued their notorious Flying Saucer Report in *Weird Science-Fantasy* #26, Dec 1954.

Plastered across the cover was a yellow banner screaming "E.C. Challenges the U.S. Air Force." Boy, did they ever! The entire issue was filled with one, two and three-page distillations of allegedly factual saucer

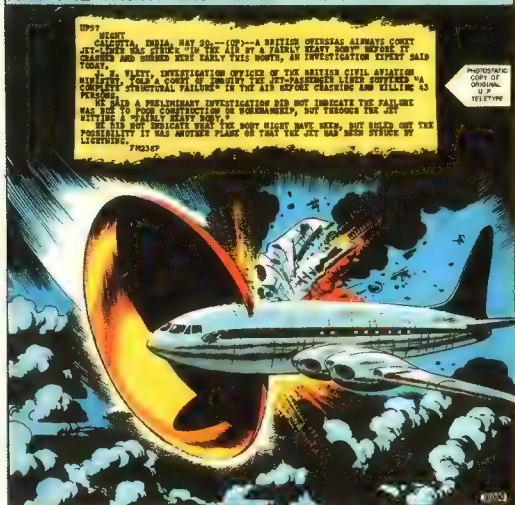


Weird Science #13 (#2) (1950 EC).



Weird Science-Fantasy #26 (1954 EC).

EARLY IN MAY, 1952, A BRITISH OVERSEAS AIRWAYS "COMET" JET-LINER CRASHED AND BURNED NEAR CALCUTTA, INDIA, KILLING 43 PERSONS. YOU READ ABOUT IT IN YOUR DAILY NEWSPAPER. THE STORIES AS PRINTED SLIGHTLY BLAMED THE CRASH ON STRUCTURAL FAILURE, POOR WORKMANSHIP, FAULTY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION. ALL "COMET" JET-LINERS WERE BOUNDED AND AN INVESTIGATION WAS BEGUN. THE INVESTIGATION FOUND NOTHING WRONG WITH "COMET" JET-LINERS' STRUCTURAL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION. THE CASE WAS CLOSED. THE PATTERN OF SECRECY AND VEILED FACT WAS REPEATED! AND THE TRUTH WAS NEVER TOLD. HERE! READ THIS!



WAS THIS "FAIRLY HEAVY BODY" A FLYING SAUCER?

Wally Wood's splash page for *Weird Science-Fantasy* #26 (1954 EC).

accounts. No fiction. No twist endings. Not a single tentacular Martian in the book. All illustrated by classic EC artists like Wood, Williamson, Orlando and others. And every one of them ending with a statement or observation debunking the official Air Force explanations for the particular sighting. More an illustrated dossier than a generic comic book, this was an audacious, even reckless, attempt to rip the lid off what William Gaines clearly regarded as the suppression of the truth of a quasi-invasion of the planet by extraterrestrial forces of unknown origin. Al Feldstein wrote it with the help of pioneer UFOlogist Major Donald E. Keyhoe, a retired Marine Corps officer and once upon a time a pulp writer responsible for things like *Dr. Yen Sin*, who was then warring with the USAF over the truth behind the saucers. Keyhoe's 1950 book, *Flying Saucers are Real*, was one of the first to capitalize on the subject. His second book became a 1953 bestseller.

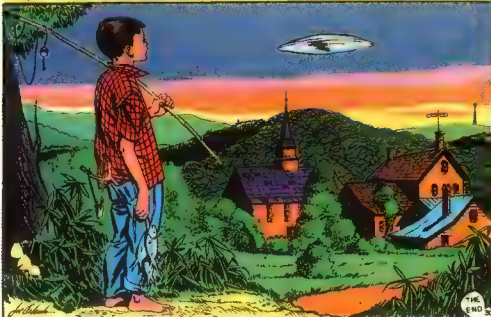
In an alarming editorial, Gaines and Feldstein stated:

"We believe that the public has been confused....that the facts have been muddled...that there is much more to the 'Flying Saucer' than the Air Force cares to admit.

"We believe that the public should be kept informed of all developments in the 'Flying Saucer' story.

"We have reason to believe a group within the Air Force

SO LIFT YOUR HEAD UP... ABOVE THE SMOKE-SCREEN OF CONTRIVED EXPLANATIONS AND HALF-TRUTHS. LOOK TO THE STARS, AMERICA! Perhaps one night YOU'LL JOIN THE HUNDREDS UPON HUNDREDS OF COMPETENT CIVILIAN AND ARMY PILOTS, SCIENTISTS, AND AERONAUTICAL EXPERTS WHO HAVE BEEN TORMENTED BY THE AIR FORCE AS "MISINTERPRETERS, HYSTERICIS, AND PUBLICITY SEEKERS!" Perhaps YOU, TOO, WILL SEE A FLYING SAUCER.



Joe Orlando's final panel for *Weird Science-Fantasy* #26 (1954 EC).

does not agree with this.

"We believe that this group, though in the minority, is in control.

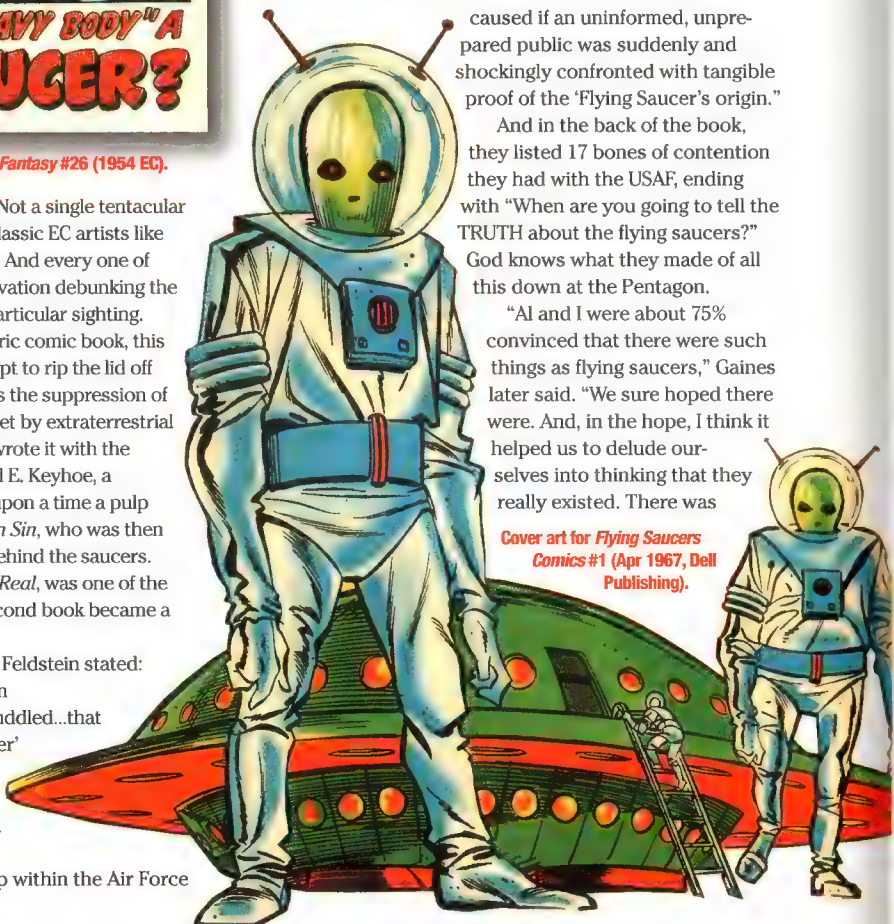
"We shudder to think of the chaos that could be

caused if an uninformed, unprepared public was suddenly and shockingly confronted with tangible proof of the 'Flying Saucer's origin."

And in the back of the book, they listed 17 bones of contention they had with the USAF, ending with "When are you going to tell the TRUTH about the flying saucers?" God knows what they made of all this down at the Pentagon.

"Al and I were about 75% convinced that there were such things as flying saucers," Gaines later said. "We sure hoped there were. And, in the hope, I think it helped us to delude ourselves into thinking that they really existed. There was

Cover art for *Flying Saucers Comics* #1 (Apr 1967, Dell Publishing).





Chic Stone's splash page art for "Night Sighting" from *Flying Saucers Comics* #1 (Apr 1967, Dell Publishing).

such a wealth of sightings and unexplained experiences, and quite a convincing case had been built up at that time for them. Just the whole idea that the Air Force was suppressing something was delightful, anyway. So even if it weren't true, we wished it were."

Sales streaked toward the stratosphere, thanks in large measure to radio UFOologists talking it up on airwaves. Mail orders poured in faster than the tiny EC staff could process them. "We were inundated," Gaines confessed. "I remember it was a dreadful thing. I was sorry we'd ever gotten involved in it."

A year later, EC was out of the comic book business, the victim of a Congressional sub-committee investigating, not strange saucers, but juvenile delinquency. No one at the time connected the two events. Eventually, the first flying saucer flap flopped, and while UFOs didn't really go away, the skies were relatively quiet for a time.

It all revved up bigger than ever around 1965-66, when a gigantic wave of saucer sightings swept the United States, and the old controversy flared up all over again. It got so big that even TV got into the act, when producer Quinn Martin offered up Roy Thinnes in *The Invaders* as an architect desperately trying to inform the unhearing world that hostile aliens had really, really landed.

I was on the scene by then. Intrigued by the newspaper articles that hinted that the comic book stories I was devouring

in those days weren't completely fantasy, I carefully collected UFO clippings and scanned the skies for freak objects. So it was perfectly natural when Dell Comics released *Flying Saucers* #1 in the spring of 1967, I snatched that sucker up.

Flying saucers in comic books weren't new. In fact, they were as plentiful as superheroes. Kirby, Ditko, Heck and others drew them in profusion in the pages of *Tales of Suspense*, *Strange Tales* and other titles. They were common in *Adventures into the Unknown* and *Forbidden Worlds*, where Ogden Whitney usually did the honors. At DC, *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery in Space* were chock full of them. But no matter the publisher, four-color flying saucers were fun. And you didn't have to believe in them, just enjoy them like the cotton candy for the eyes they were. Whether the vanguard of an alien invasion of Earth or piloted by the poor misunderstood tripeds of Alpha Centauri, this was the stuff of pure sense of wonder.

The saucer stories of Dell's new title were a very different species. For one thing, they weren't stories so much as anecdotes. Creepy anecdotes. Although uncredited, the plotlines were ripped from the headlines—or more correctly from the wave of UFO books publishers were spitting out to cash in on the new flap. Books like Frank Edwards' *Flying Saucers—Serious Business* and Jacques Vallee's *Anatomy of the Phenomenon*. Books I just happened to have read, thus my familiarity with the source material.

The first issue, dated April 1967, set the tone. Five stories. Five different artists. Who knows how many scripters. I do know that Chic Stone had the honors of drawing the first tale, "Night Sighting." He had a bright style, in contrast to the gloomier guys who followed. The story told the tale of a seaman who is buzzed by a UFO one night, and complains to the cops. He's in the middle of being told in no uncertain terms to sleep it off when a second report comes in. Once the law rushes to the scene they too are buzzed for a couple of panels until the saucer scoots away and normalcy returns.

That's it. No landing. No aliens. No menace. Barely a hint of conflict. In short, this is an anecdote, not really a story. If the author had submitted it to any of the fantasy-SF comic books,



Splash page art for "Devil Ship" from *Flying Saucers Comics* #1.



A page from Sam Glanzman's alien abduction story "Far Out Physical" from *Flying Saucers Comics* #1.

the editor would have stamped REJECTED on the script and suggested he learn to plot.

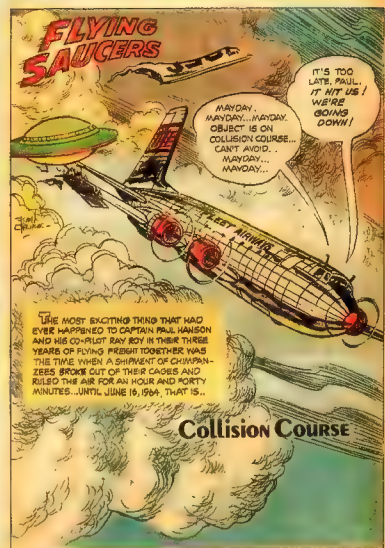
Aliens do show up in the second tale, "The Devil Ship." Drawn by an artist I can't place, it recounts the purportedly true tale of two Brazilian kids who encounter a pale alien while playing baseball. Out of curiosity, the alien touches them. The pair freak out. Nothing much happens beyond that. Except the kids' hair turns white from the shock. Imagine if they had run into a *real* alien out of *Tales to Astonish*. It wouldn't have been pretty.

Sam Glanzman drew the next one. A lone hunter is subjected to an alien medical examination and set free. Sal Trapini followed that up with an action-packed encounter between Kentucky hill folk and bulletproof aliens. Finally, Frank Springer chronicles a fatal encounter

between a cargo plane and a flying disc. In any other comic book, the disc would have zapped the plane in spectacular style. Not here. The aircraft loses a wing to the passing disc and goes down in flames. End of close encounter of the near-miss kind.

Well, when you're limited by what the mainstream press reports, you're stuck telling the tale as it stands. Or lies.

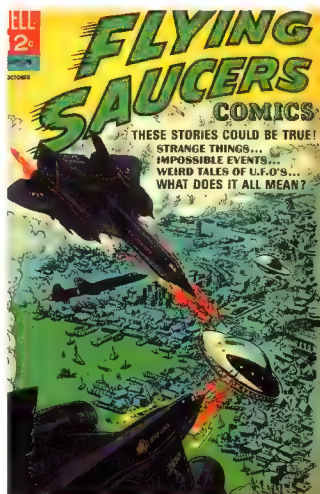
Yet for me at the time, I found *Flying Saucers* strangely intriguing. For one thing, where other publishers felt free to have a different kind of Martian in every issue, Dell offered up what we would now call the standard *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* alien. The artists all made a credible attempt to draw the same species of extraterrestrial—small, pale, cat-eyed androgynistic aliens. This gave *Flying Saucers* a weird issue-to-issue consistency, as if the stories were all random disconnected chapters from a larger puzzle of an epic. Which in a strange sense is exactly what they were.



Frank Springer's splash page for "Collision Course" from *Flying Saucers Comics* #1.

Not that there were many issues. A quarterly, three months passed until the second issue of *Flying Saucers* appeared. The same rotation of artists greeted me. Once again, Frank Springer drew a UFO vs. Earth aircraft story. The rest was pretty much the same gloomy fare, except now four longer stories filled out the issue instead of the inaugural five.

Springer had the cover story to #3, showing two SR-1 Blackbird reconnaissance aircraft blasting away at an impervious saucer. But the most interesting tale in that third issue was called "The Fear of Death." About a high school physical education instructor who becomes lost in the woods and is taken aboard a saucer and healed by aliens after he suffers radiation burns from getting too close to the UFO. The aliens in this story are carbon copies of the others who came before, except they sport military-style caps. Their ship is nothing unusual, being a



Frank Springer's cover for *Flying Saucers Comics* #3 (Oct 1967, Dell Publishing).



Space Adventures Presents UFO #60 (Oct 1967 Charlton).

white disc with the usual upper and lower domes and rotating edge lights. Access to the ship is via a flat hydraulic lift that drops down from a port in the lower dome.

Now I know that UFO aficionados sometimes tend toward a mild paranoia. And I admit to being interested in the subject back then. So I don't know how to tell you this. But over at Charlton Comics, in that same year, they published a thing called *Space Adventures Presents U.F.O.* Not based on purported events, but written by Denny O'Neil (as Sergius O'Shaugnessy), it's a round-robin story in three parts, drawn by Pat Boyette, Jim Aparo, and a terrible artist who signed himself "Melonius Thonk."

Newspaper reporter Paul Mann is drawn into intrigue over a stolen germ warfare plague when aliens intervene and Mann is taken aboard their ship. These aliens are strictly central casting. Their ship is classic—a double-domed disk decked out with rim lights. Nothing to get nervous about there, right? Except when Mann is taken aboard, the lower dome opens up and an eerily familiar flat hydraulic lift drops down to receive him.

It's the same ship. The identical Dell aliens—right down to their uniforms. True, they wear different insignia and the Charlton aliens don't sport the paramilitary caps. But in all other respects this could have been an unadvertised inter-



From Flying Saucers Comics #3, the nearly duplicate art of Space Adventures Presents UFO #60 cover (left).

company crossover. Except that just wasn't done in those days.

There's even a panel in the *Flying Saucers* story that is practically a duplicate of the *Space Adventures* cover—which by the way is signed "Rocke," really Rocco Mastroserio.

But the disturbing, distressing, diabolical thing is that both comic books bore the same cover date—October 1967! I admit it. This freaked me out at the time. How do you swipe something before it's even printed? Over thirty years later, I still get goose bumps. Little ones.

I couldn't rationally explain it. But something was not right in four-color land. For with the next issue, *Flying Saucers* is suddenly a bi-monthly, and the damn aliens are back with their hydraulic lift kidnapping a poor farmer and giving him a stern lecture about Earth's dangerous flirtation with atomic weapons in a tale called "Trust Your Eyes." Then, mysteriously, *Flying Saucers* is no more. No fifth issue was ever published.

Now I'm not a conspiracy buff by any means, but can you come up with a sensible explanation for why Dell would suddenly shift a quarterly comic book to bi-monthly, and then drop it like a hot potato? You increase frequency because sales are up, right?

And does this uncanny sequence of seemingly synchronistic events have anything to do with Charlton being invaded by Dell aliens? Or



Cover art for Flying Saucers Comics #2 (Jul 1967, Dell Publishing).



Jim Aparo's splash art for "The Secret of the Saucer." *Space Adventures Presents UFO* #60.



A page from Pat Boyette's "The Plague." *Space Adventures Presents UFO* #60.

was it the other way around?

And what eerie light—if any—does this shed on EC's abrupt collapse after challenging the Air Force a decade before? You can see why back in 1967, I was vaguely relieved when Dell chose to release no more issues of *Flying Saucers*. This was all too spooky for me. But the strangeness was not yet over. Charlton actually sequelled *Space Adventures Presents U.F.O.* #60 with *Space Adventures* #2 the following year, and Mr. Mann once more encountered his alien friends.

The same month—I swear to God this is true—the exact same month Dell's arch-rival Gold Key released its own entry in the flying saucer sweepstakes—the redundantly-titled *UFO Flying Saucers*. An annual-sized giant, it offered the same lame formula Dell had: true tales ripped from flying saucer books and drawn by a battery of artists, principally John Celardo and Joe

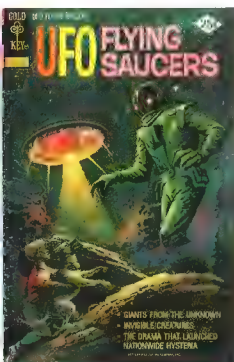
Certa (who should have been right at home since he was the main Manhunter from Mars artist over at DC). The rest were the guys who drew *The Twilight Zone* and other weird stuff for Gold Key—Alberto Gioletti, Frank Bolle and Tony Tallarico.

Of course, UFO comics were nothing new. Gold Key had in fact published an adaptation of the short-lived *Invaders* TV show. But *UFO Flying Saucers* was very different from the confrontational approach EC had taken over a decade before. I guess you could call Dell's approach docu-fantasy. Seeing *Flying Saucers* drop off the radar screen, Gold Key simply copied the idea.

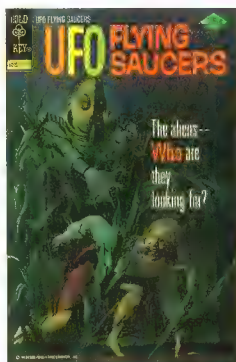
Obviously, the folks over at Dell noticed their thunder had been stolen because about a year after *UFO Flying Saucers* #1 was released, they re-released *Flying Saucers* #1 with an October 1969

cover date and a new 15-cent price tag. Ads replaced the Frank Springer feature pages on the inside and back covers, so readers were actually getting three less pages for their additional three cents. I guess it was a spite thing. Dell never reprinted another issue. Meanwhile, Gold Key waited until 1970 to release their second issue. It wasn't until 1972 that *UFO Flying Saucers* #3 came out.

For a while, *UFO Flying Saucers* was published every other summer, but after a while the frequency picked up. They also fiddled with the formula after a while, telling stories that were clearly fantasy and not docu-fantasy, but balancing them with one-page vignettes based on actual flying saucer sightings submitted by readers. These were even less qualified to be called stories than the thinnest newspaper-clipping-turned-comic-strip, but they were



UFO Flying Saucers #5 (Gold Key, 1975).



UFO Flying Saucers #11 (Gold Key, 1976).



UFO and Outer Space #14 (Gold Key, 1978).



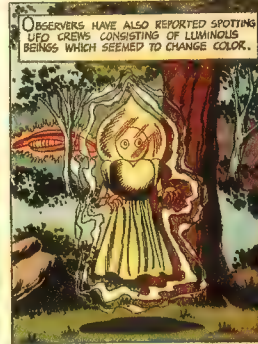
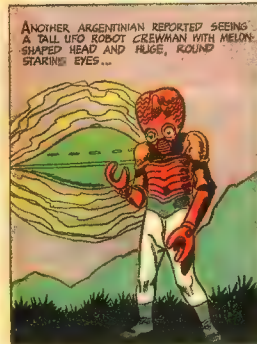
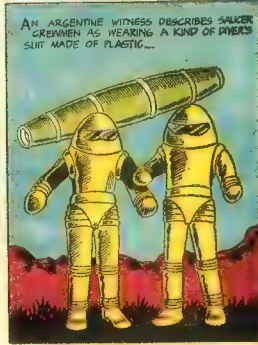
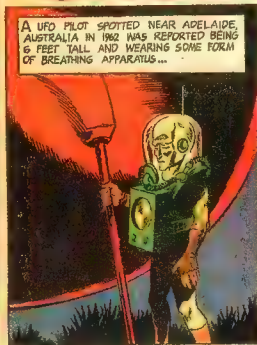
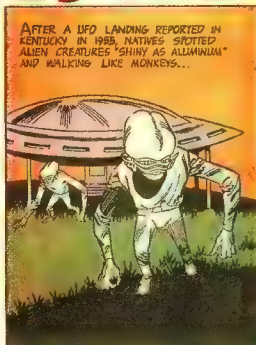
UFO and Outer Space #18 (Gold Key, 1978).



UFO and Outer Space #20 (Gold Key, 1979).

WHO FLIES THE

SAUCERS?



Double page spread from *UFO Flying Saucers* #1.

apparently popular with readers, many of whom seemed to be seeing weird things over their roofs or in their backyards.

When *UFO Flying Saucers* petered out in 1980, Gold Key took to repackaging the older material under titles like *UFO and Outer Space*. It sold, so they commissioned new material. Not content with that, Gold Key recycled older issues under titles like *UFO Mysteries* and *UFO Encounters*.

I had long since stopped buying it by then, and as far as I know, no other publisher has attempted to revive this most bizarre of comic book sub-genres—if it can even be called that. I'm a lot older than I used to be, and I hardly read flying saucer books any more. And when I do, I keep a grain of salt at hand. But for a long time, the synchronistic aliens at Dell and Charlton really bothered me. What the heck was going on? Was there a spy at one house, stealing concepts? If so, why didn't he steal something original? Was somebody playing mind-games with credulous comic book fans? Or, more sinister yet, had *actual aliens* infiltrated the comic book companies in order to advance their extraterrestrial agendas?

We may never really know. But I do have a theory: it's a little wild, but a lot better than staring sleeplessly at the ceiling at night because to this very day people still see strange shiny things in the sky.

Now, I can't identify the unidentified Dell artist who drew those two suspect stories in *Flying Saucers* #3 and #4. At various times, I have postulated Dick Giordano or Frank

MacLaughlin, prolific Charlton artists of that time. (Like certain aliens, a lot of Charlton artists look alike to me.) The inking reminds me of Giordano's brother in law, Sal Trapini, so this could be a Giordano-Trapini production. But suppose...just suppose that artist Rocco Mastroserio, working for both Charlton and Dell in 1967, was given the cover to *Space Adventures Presents U.F.O.* to draw, liked the look of the bone-white aliens inside and their nifty spacecraft, and simply *copied* the designs when handed his next *Flying Saucers* script. The rest is sheer coincidence.

I know it's pat. I know I sound like one of those smug Air Force experts trying to tell an over-excited motorist that the flaming orange sphere that scorched the paint off his new Corvette was actually swamp gas or the planet Venus magnified and distorted by a low-lying fog. But the art styles *do* kind of resemble one another. Maybe it's a reach. I don't know. Without positive proof, like a signature or something, we can never be absolutely certain. And we can't exactly ask Mastroserio. He died in 1968, only a year after all this mystery broke out. Coincidence, I'm sure. I don't think he was silenced or *abducted*, or anything like that.

But what would you *rather* believe? Hnnnnnnnn...? 

Special thanks to Les Treece-Sinclair and to the CUFON Flying Saucer Comic Book Cover Gallery, www.cufon.org.

THE PULP CONNECTION

THRILLING HEROES



THE KNIGHTS OF NEDOR

Many are the superheroes who fell in the closing years of the postwar 1940s and never rose again. No line of costumed characters ever met a more final and fatal demise than the superheroes of Nedor. They never produced a memorable supervillain, never banded together to form a league of their own, and when they finally succumbed to declining sales, they fell like dinosaurs in the aftermath of an asteroid strike.

Ned Pines' Golden Age comics group operated under numerous names like Better, Nedor, Standard, Pines, Polo, Great and Visual Editions. Today, they don't have the collectable cache of Timely, despite their striking Alex Schomburg covers. They're more like a low-rent MLJ,

which they resemble in a bizarre but fun kind of way. Nedor produced only a quartet of major-league super-

heroes: the Black Terror, the Fighting Yank, Doc Strange and Pyroman. All of these guys are fondly remembered by Golden Age collectors, but have never been revived successfully.

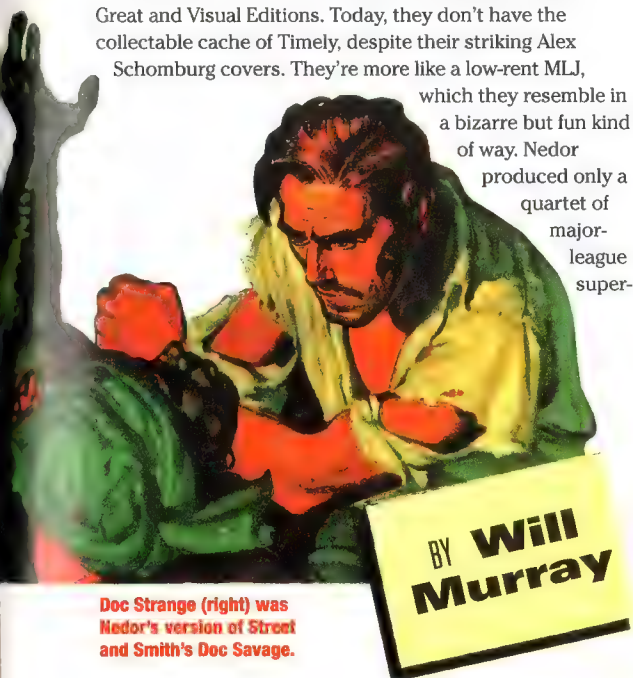
It's true that Nedor artists were not the greatest. It was one of the few places Jack Kirby never worked. Richard Hughes was their star writer. He created and wrote their top-selling superheroes. But Hughes found his true and lasting fame at the American Comics Group as Nedor faded from the scene in the 1950s.

The chief problem with Nedor was in the editing. They got their material from Cinema Comics, a shop run by Pines' brother-in-law, B. W. Sangor. There was no strong editorial hand like National's Whit Ellsworth or Timely's Stan Lee at Standard—or even a coherent vision. Comics were selling, so they published comics. When comics stopped selling, they folded their tents and were never seen again.

This is ironic because Pines ran one of the biggest pulp houses of the time, Standard Magazines—also known as the Thrilling Group. Today, they are remembered for successful pulp heroes like the Phantom Detective, the Lone Eagle, Captain Future and the Black Bat.

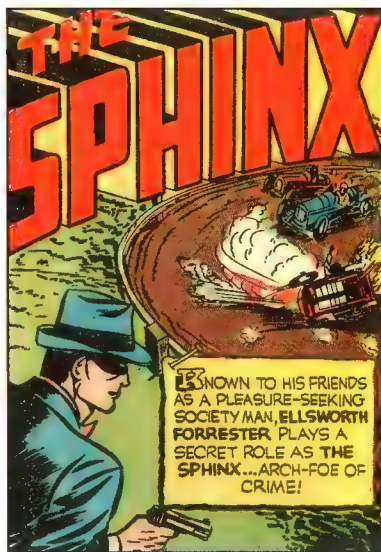
It's not like they didn't take these best-selling heroes and plunk them down into their comics. They did. But for some reason they translated their biggest guns in ways that baffle logic and boggle the mind.

Nedor launched its line in 1939 with



Doc Strange (right) was Nedor's version of Street and Smith's Doc Savage.





The Mask and The Sphinx were knockoffs of their famous pulp counterparts The Phantom Detective (right) and The Black Bat (opposite page).

Best Comics. It was a strange sideways-format book that flopped after only four issues. Most of the strips had appeared in newspapers before, and the entire package had the look of one of those preprinted comic insert sections with a glossy cover folded over it. Its star character was a globe-trotting black adventurer named the Red Mask, who might be described as Lee Falk's Phantom in a pith helmet—i.e. without any of his glamour or mystique. George Storm signed the strip. The rest of the package consisted of obscure humor strips copyrighted 1937 by Syndicated Features Corp. The book got deservedly lost in the early superhero flood.

Apparently Ned Pines learned a hard lesson with *Best Comics*. Instead of recycling newspaper strips for his second four-color foray, he completely retooled, dipping into his pulp line for his next inspiration. Nedor—it stood for Ned and his mother Dora—became a lot like another half-forgotten comic book company, Street & Smith. They threw any pulp hero to which they owned a copyright into their new comic books. One problem was, Nedor lacked a larger-than-life superhero like The

Shadow or Doc Savage to capitalize on. Another is that everything they did during their formative period appeared editorially directionless.

Nedor really got off the ground in 1940 with *Thrilling Comics*, *Exciting Comics* and *Startling Comics* in what had to be the first re-launch in comics history. Their early heroes included names familiar to readers of Pines' pulps: Captain Future, the Ghost, the Rio Kid, the Masked Rider and the Lone Eagle. All were ultimately eclipsed by the original superheroes subsequently created by Richard Hughes, some of which were spun off into their own titles.

One reason was that Thrilling's pulp

heroes were almost all alike. As a company, Nedor was pathologically fond of heroes who wore masks. The Phantom Detective was a detective who wore a black domino mask and was a master of disguise. The Masked Detective was a newspaper reporter turned crime buster who wore a black domino mask and also employed disguises like the proverbial Man of a Thousand Faces. Neither was to be confused with the Crimson Mask, otherwise distinguished only by the fact that his domino mask was red. Every one of them wore a plain vanilla business suit.

So it's no surprise that the early Nedor comics were overrun with boring masked heroes in business suits, like the Mask and the Sphinx who ran concurrently in *Exciting Comics*, both drawn by the same artist!

It happens that one of Pines' top pulpeters, Norman A.



Nearly all of Nedor's heroes made their debuts in either *Thrilling Comics*, *Exciting Comics* or *Startling Comics*.



Rudolph Belarski's beautiful cover painting of the Black Bat for the pulp title *Black Book Detective*.

Daniels, kept meticulous records of his work. His log shows him dabbling in comic scripting in 1939, doing the Ghost and Captain Future, before turning his back on the field forever. The fact that he just launched his Black Bat novel series in Pines' *Black Book Detective* probably had something to do with it. Suddenly, he was too busy to do comics.

The irony here is that while Daniels ghosted many Thrilling pulp characters, he never wrote the Ghost or Captain Future for the pulps. Even wilder, the Nedor comics versions of both characters are completely different from their supposed pulp inspirations!

In the pulps, the Ghost was stage-magician detective George Chance. The comics version was another guy entirely, who possessed real supernatural powers a la Mandrake the Magician and Zatarra. Also known as George Chance, he debuted in *Thrilling Comics* #3 (Apr 1940) and ran to issue #52. In the pulps, the Ghost became the Green Ghost after a while. The strip never reflected that modification. The Ghost was replaced by a faithful but dull replica of the Phantom Detective beginning in #53. Edmond Good, later to pioneer Tomahawk at DC, among others, drew the feature. Though he ran twenty years in pulps, the Phantom strip never caught on in comics, folding after only two years. Maybe the fact that he fought crime in a top hat and black domino mask contributed to his downfall.

This was actually the Phantom's second foray in comics. Few suspect this, but *Exciting Comics*' Sphinx was actually a modified version of the Phantom Detective. The pulp Phantom was really society playboy Richard Curtis Van Loan. The Sphinx's true identity was social gadfly Ellsworth Forrester. He fought crime in a blue suit and black domino mask, just like his counterpart. However, he did at times sport unusual strength and other minor powers. So how does this make him the Phantom in disguise? There's one dead giveaway: The Phantom flashes a diamond-studded badge as a means of easy identification when in disguise. That identical badge is also the hallmark of the Sphinx.

One can only guess as to why Ned Pines felt the need to call his top hero a different name in comics. Maybe he didn't want to siphon off readers from his pulp incarnation. To avoid confusion with Lee Falk's Phantom of jungle and newspaper fame is another distinct probability. In the pulps, they got around this issue by renaming him the Phantom Detective. Before the Ghost Who Walks came along, Van Loan was simply called the Phantom. In any case, the Sphinx petered out after only three years.

Even the Masked Rider, Pines' long-running Western knockoff of the Lone Ranger, had a completely different true identity after landing in *Exciting Comics*. In the pulps, he was cowpoke Wayne Morgan. In comics, call him Bronc Randall. Inevitably, he wore a black domino mask with his cowboy duds. After one issue, he jumped over to *Startling Comics*, where he completed his run. This was a Nedor pattern. After publishing a character's origin in one comic, they immediately switched him to another title.

Captain Future debuted in *Startling Comics* #1 (Jun 1940). A typical superhero, he bore absolutely no resemblance to Edmond Hamilton's classic space opera hero. Instead, he was scientist Andrew Byrant, who gains superpowers after crossed infrared and gamma rays bathe his body. For some odd reason, he didn't wear the regulation Thrilling-issue black mask. Artist Kin Platt inaugurated the strip.



Startling Comics #1 (Jun 1940) featured the debut of Captain Future.



Major Mars makes his first appearance in *Exciting Comics* #1.

Strangely, two months before, a character named Major Mars kicked off in *Exciting Comics* #1. Except for the name, he was Captain Future! His origin story was a literal condensation of *Captain Future* and *the Space Emperor*, the premier CF pulp novel. Girlfriend Joan Randall was rechristened Joan Jilson. For some reason, they didn't bother changing the name of Captain Future's robot sidekick, Grag, when they paired him with Major Mars. The strip was replaced in the next issue by the Space Rovers, also drawn by the Major Mars artist Max Plaisted. Major Mars was never seen again.

Similarly, Daniels' first Black Bat novel was adapted for *Exciting* #1. It's a reasonably faithful adaptation. Except for some weird reason, the comic book version isn't called the Black Bat, but the Mask! His true identity, District Attorney Tony Quinn, becomes DA Tony Colby. Girlfriend Carol Baldwin is renamed Smith. Other names were also changed to protect the innocent, but the crime boss who splashed acid on Tony Quinn's face, blinding him and creating the need for an eye transplant that bestowed supernatural vision on the Black Bat, did the same favor for Tony Colby. He remained Oliver Slate.

There is a very good reason for this transformation. When the Black Bat debuted in 1939, it was only months after Batman

sprang forth in *Detective* #27. Lawsuits were threatened. But cooler heads prevailed. By a lucky break (for whoever would have lost his character copyright), DC's new editorial director happened to be a friend of Ned Pines. In fact, Whitney Ellsworth had ghosted a handful of Phantom Detective and Dan Fowler novels before going over to DC. The two men worked out a compromise without benefit of lawyers. A key provision of the deal was that Pines wouldn't publish the Black Bat in comics and DC would keep Batman out of the pulps. Given the timing, I wouldn't be surprised if the Mask strip was in the works when legal hell broke loose and it was altered on the fly. The Black Bat's earless cowl became a horned and beaked hood. The bat stickers left by the Black Bat look suspiciously like little owls. In fact, the



Exciting Comics #1 also features the comic adaptation of the Black Bat, only in this story he is called The Mask.



Mask strongly resembles a human owl. It seems that in salvaging this character for comic books, they renamed him the Owl, only to be beaten into print by (take your pick) either Dell's Owl, Hillman's Owl or Prize's Black Owl, all three of whom hit the scene coincident with the Mask's first appearance!

An editorial in *Thrilling* #1 seems to confirm this. It said in part: "*Thrilling Comics* is the first magazine to bring you a complete novel in picture form. In coming issues, we will introduce such fascinating new characters as Captain Future, the Ghost, the Owl, the Lone Eagle, the Rio Kid, and a host of others." The "complete novel" is a reference to the 37-page Doc Strange origin in that issue.

Ironically, the Mask debuted in *Exciting* #1 just

about the same time that *Batman* #1 hit the stands. In subsequent installments, the Mask's owlsh mask was replaced by a more traditional earless cowl. Starting with one of the most dramatic pulp heroes of that time—the Black Bat moved through the night outfitted in a black bat-like cloak topped by a bat-eared cowl, able to see in the

dark, and perfectly willing to blow away assorted cheap hoods with a matched set of .45 automatics—he was sadly reduced to being just another dull masked detective in a drab business suit.

Drawn by Raymond Thayer and Kin Platt, the Mask strip ran for a lackluster twenty issues before being eclipsed by the Black Terror. Debuting in *Exciting* #9, he is considered to be an original character, a druggist named Bob Benton who gains superpowers via a chemical formula. He's trying to concoct a new health tonic when his kid assistant accidentally

Perhaps Nedor's most famous character, Black Terror



Introducing THE BLACK TERROR

EXCITING COMICS

10¢
NUMBER 9





A panel from *Black Terror's* debut and origin from *Exciting Comics* #9 (1941).

pours in the wrong ingredient—formic acid extracted from red ants, the strongest earthly creatures for their size. Inhaling the stuff, Benton becomes superstrong. Inspiration strikes. Next thing you know, he's tricked out as the Black Terror.

Thrilling had been running the adventures of a druggist named Doc Clarke who fought crime as the Crimson Mask in their pulp, *Detective Novels*. It's possible one influenced the other. If so, maybe Bob Benton came within a feeler of becoming the Crimson Ant! Norman Daniels created that pulp series, too.

Originated by Richard Hughes and drawn initially by Elmer Wexler and later Kin Platt, the Black Terror had the spiffiest costume in the entire Thrilling line of superheroes. Nearly all black, it sported the skull-and-crossbones chest emblem druggists used to slap on bottles of poison. (Yet he got it at a costume shop!) His black domino mask actually matched the rest of his ensemble. The Black Terror was soon awarded his own title.

Doc Strange was essentially a Doc Savage clone with standard superpowers gained from drinking an elixir of solar atoms dubbed "Alosun." No black mask for him, either. He first appeared in *Thrilling Comics* #1 as the work of Hughes and

Alex Kostuk. George Mandel took over the strip in short order. Strange's outfit strongly resembled Captain Future's superhero suit.

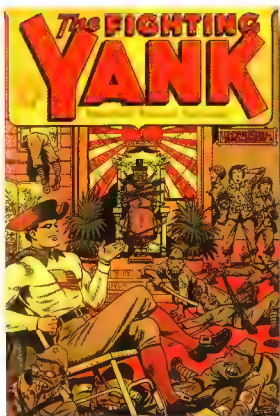
The Fighting Yank debuted in *Startling Comics* #10. Bruce Carter III dons the magic cloak of his Revolutionary ancestor and with Colonial garb set off by a tri-corne Paul Revere hat—and the inescapable black domino mask—fights spies and saboteurs. He got his own title in 1942, the first Nedor hero to do so despite his painfully retro costuming. Jon L. Blummer is said to be the strip's first artist, though the Black Terror's Elmer Wexler



Doc Strange begins in *Thrilling Comics* #1 (1940).



The Fighting Yank #11 (1945).



The Fighting Yank #12 (1945).

carried the strip in its formative days. Apparently, Timely Comics wasn't paying much attention to Nedor. They launched a non-superhero character called the Fighting Yank in *Captain America* #17 (Aug 1942)—just a month before Nedor's Fighting Yank received his own book.

Nedor's least successful first-line superhero had the coolest origin. Electrical engineering student Dick Martin is executed in the electric chair for someone else's arson. Instead of frying, he gains electrical superpowers. His costume sported a cowl with lightning-bolt antennae. Pyroman first showed his stuff in *Startling Comics* #18. Ken Battefield was the lackluster artist.

All later attempts by the Nedor team to produce a memorable superhero failed to catch fire. The Grim Reaper started in *Fighting Yank*, but jumped over to *Wonder Comics* after only one appearance. The Liberator was Nedor's entry into the star-spangled superhero lists—although his powers came from an Egyptian potion. He ran in *Exciting*. A second Captain America clone showed up in *America's Best Comics* a year later. The American Eagle soon took up residence in *Exciting*. The Scarab landed in *Exciting* after his origin appeared in *Startling Comics*. Nedor also had its own in-house red-white-and-blue kid gang. But no one today collects Maurice Gutwirth's *Four Comrades*.

In 1944, William H. Wise produced a one-shot called *Complete Book of Comics and Funnies* and four issues of a thing called *Mystery Comics*, all featuring Brad Spencer, Wonderman, written by Richard Hughes and drawn by Bob Oksner. After those books folded, he starts showing up in Pines' new *Wonder Comics*,



The American Eagle in action.



Pyroman makes his debut in Startling Comics #18 (1942).

supplanting Al Camerata's Grim Reaper. Actually, *Mystery* had been a Pines book all along. Wise published several wartime titles for Pines as a way around paper quotas that kept him from releasing more books than he could legally under his own banner.

All of which makes you wonder where DC's lawyers were napping. Just a few years before, they successfully sued Victor Fox over Will Eisner's Wonder Man, who had appeared in Fox's



Complete Book of Comics and Funnies (1944) featured Brad Spencer, Wonderman.

own version of *Wonder Comics*. But the Wise/Pines Wonderman was more Science Fiction hero than traditional superhero (he attained the ability to make his body hard as steel after being energized by a "secret current") and thus may have passed safely under the radar. In his first appearances he sported the trademark Thrilling black domino mask, but soon discarded it. Nedor rarely

experimented with superheroines. Their earliest was the Woman in Red. Actually policewoman Peggy Allen, she was a Blonde Phantom type replete with red cowl later changed to a red domino mask—in short, a distaff Sphinx. She ran in *Thrilling Comics* starting with issue 2. Their most successful lady crime crusher was Miss Masque, who popped up in *Exciting* #51 in 1946. In reality a socialite, Diana Adams wore a simple red dress and black domino mask—and jumped from title to title like a ruby-red grasshopper. Bob Oksner made her look good in four colors.

Oddly enough, Nedor had another problem with character-confusion. But this one seems deliberate. Nedor's first foray into the burgeoning funny animal field was *Coo-Coo Comics* in 1942. Disgruntled former Terrytoons animator Kin Platt had walked away from Paul Terry's animation studio just as they were launching Super Mouse. So when Platt's version of Supermouse surfaced in *Coo-Coo Comics* #1, bad blood quickly boiled over. The behind-the-scenes machinations may never be known, but when the legal smoke cleared, Supermouse had his own title, and Paul Terry, upset because audiences kept confusing the two characters, changed his Super Mouse to the name by which he is still known today: Mighty Mouse. Ironically, Nedor later published an authorized Mighty Mouse comic book. The better mouse ultimately won out.

It wasn't long after the Batman-Black Bat fiasco of 1939 that Whitney Ellsworth brought Mort Weisinger over to National. Soon, Weisinger lured Jack Schiff away from Pines, along with Bernie Breslauer, and the nucleus of DC's powerhouse editorial team was in place. This may have been the first instance of an early comics company raiding an established pulp house. What effect this may have had on Nedor's editorial vision—or striking lack thereof—will never be known.

Richard Hughes remained Nedor's de facto editor until sometime in the late '40s, when he took over the American

Comics Group, which itself grew out of Cinema Comics. Cinema and Nedor may have parted company here. At this point, good artists like Jerry Robinson, Mort Meskin, George Tuska and others began drawing the Black Terror and Fighting Yank. But it was too late for Nedor's costumed heroes.

Early in 1949, aging pulp writer Joe Archibald assumed editorial

Wonderman battles Dr. Voodoo in *Wonder Comics* #11 (1947).

responsibility for Nedor. Archibald specialized in aviation and sports pulp fiction, but had been a sports cartoonist at one time. Early strips of his like "Frosty Ayre" and "Lucky Duck" ran in Dell's formative funnybook *The Funnies* back in the late 1920s. I suspect Archibald landed the job of running Nedor after scripting extensively for them. He could not turn the company around, which never really recovered from the paper shortage of World War II. By the end of the year, Archibald had booted the Nedor superheroes into oblivion, concentrating instead on the then-hot Western, funny animal and love genres.

Nedor ran longer than most collectors suspect. Even though they continued to publish comic books well into the Silver Age of comics, they never again touched superheroes. Unless you count their last original title, which rolled off the presses in 1959. It was *The Adventures of Mighty Mouse*.

The loss of the lucrative Dennis the Menace license to Fawcett just as Hank Ketcham's boy blunder transitioned over to TV seemed to have been the company's death knell.

Imagine what the fate of Nedor might have been if instead of going to DC, Weisinger and Schiff had remained at Standard and tackled their comics line. Many of the important early DC writers were guys who had written pulp and comics at Standard—stars like Don Cameron, Otto Binder, Ed Hamilton, Joe Samachson and Joe Millard. Other Nedor writers included Standard pulp writer/editors Donald Bayne Hobart, Alexander Samalman and Charles S. Strong, as well as the obscure Leon Lazarus and the soon-to-be famous mystery novelist Patricia Highsmith, who wrote some early Black Terrors. Another significant pulp writer, Robert Leslie Bellem, later became a major force on the *Superman* TV show. He scripted the American Crusader strip in *Thrilling Comics*. And let's not forget the artistic giants who were lost to Nedor. Two of their most prolific pulp illustrators were Dick Sprang, who ended up at DC drawing Batman, and Pete Costanza, who was hired by Fawcett to work on the first issue of *Whiz Comics* late in 1939.

Together, their combined talents might have lifted the Ghost, The Sphinx, The Scarab, Captain Future and all those other half-forgotten characters to the Olympian heights they brought Superman and Batman and others.

You never know how differently comics history might have unraveled. Today we might be celebrating Nedor's 60th anniversary, while Superman and Batman languish as fond memories.

Kind of like the Black Terror and Doc Strange.



Miss Masque from *Exciting Comics* #53 (1947).



CREATION

OF RE-CREATIONS

ONE MAN'S COLLECTING PASSION

by Jon Berk

"I am JBComicbox@aol.com, and I am a comic book fanaddict."

Okay—I said it. I love this stuff. I have loved this stuff since I was a kid. I have found that as time goes by my interests—fueled by additional knowledge and appreciation of the art form—have grown and evolved.

Correspondents to this magazine have often requested glimpses and accoutns of what people collect and why. I have decided to take on one aspect of my collecting passion—finding/commissioning re-creations of Golden Age covers.

I have been collecting for thirty years. It was only toward the end of my first decade of collecting when this self-confessed "Marvel Zombie" finished that task and looked for grazing in other pastures. At a comic show, nearing the end of my Marvel quest, I saw and purchased a copy of *Human Torch* #14. Neat! Heck, I found a whole new world to be discovered or, as one most often finds, treading trails forged by other earlier explorers/fans of this age.

So I got into the Golden Age via Timelys—got a number of these—but through the education process I discover that the early Timelys had been produced by a comic shop called Funnies, Inc. Well, you mean I could track down early renderings by some of these artists like Bill Everett or Carl Burgos? So the wonderful and esoteric world of Centaur comics opened up for me. But the bug continued. Before Centaur in March 1939, these titles were published by another company—and that leads to McMahon and Cook. And the "discovery" that these ex-DC employees actually used parallel DC stories in their early titles. I was determined to find the source of the magic of comic books.

The evolution took me to the pre-hero world of *New Fun*, *New Comics*, *Detective Comics* and early comic book titles such as *Famous Funnies*, *Popular*, etc. Bouncing back from 1933 and [continued on page 62]

All Winners #4 by Al Avison (secondary market)

Marvel Mystery #15 by Alex Schomburg (secondary market)

facing page

Weird Comics #1 by George Tuska (commissioned)

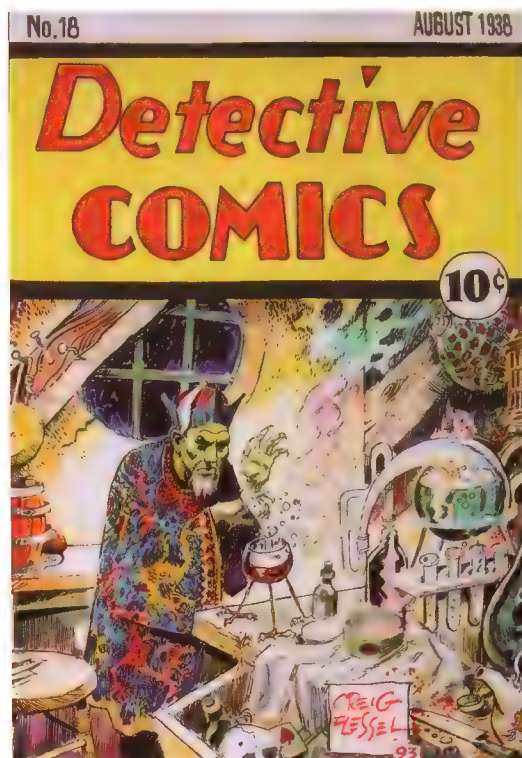
Banner Comics #3 by Jim Mooney (commissioned)

Pep Comics #34 by Bob Fujitani (commissioned)

Arrow Comics #1 by Bob Lubbers (commissioned)







Planet #14 by Dan Zolnerowich (secondary market)
Detective #18 by Creig Flessel (commissioned)



Wonderworld #7 (Lou Fine) by Murphy Anderson (commissioned)
Champion Comics #8 by Joe Simon (commissioned)

eBay: The Alternative

[continued from page 21]

leave neutral feedback, which falls in between, but anything that's not positive reflects badly on that person's future on eBay. If you think you have been unjustly accused, you can respond to the negative or neutral feedback and your answer will be printed under the other comment, so future customers or sellers can decide for themselves (perhaps by checking the previous feedback given to the one who commented negatively—after all some people are just complainers). You get one point for each positive response, and minus one for a negative. In each auction page, you can see under the seller's rating a percentage. If the seller has a three digit number and 100 per cent positive feedback, it's probable you can trust him. If you have bought multiple items from the same seller and leave positive feedback for each one, the seller will still only receive one point. The rating identifies how many different registered users have left positive feedback.

Most sellers tend to leave positive feedback soon after they receive their money. PayPal, eBay's online payment service by credit card, is instantaneous once you've signed on and been approved to use it. A separate password is needed for that. Other payment methods, such as cash, checks or money orders must be mailed and that will take extra time. Most sellers won't ship something until a check has cleared and many don't accept checks at all. Buyers then can leave positive feedback once they receive the item and see that it was as described. Amazingly, I've received rare, valuable old comic books that have been folded to fit in my apartment's tall thin metal mailboxes by postal workers. I don't know who I'm more mad at—the postal workers who don't care how they handle envelopes, or idiots that send a comic book with only a backing board inside an envelope. The latter should know better, but amazingly, even some experienced sellers with lots of positive feedback haven't got a clue when it comes to shipping long distances.

SHIPPING

If you're selling comic books and don't know how to pack them, you shouldn't sell any through the mail, whether eBay or not. Here's a crash course. A comic should be inside a plastic or Mylar bag, sandwiched between two pieces of thick corrugated cardboard, taped in place on the top, bottom and sides. Some even use mailing boxes on top of that, or padded envelopes, but even manila envelopes can be tightly taped on top of the cardboard in such a way that the book is hard to bend. A good seller should also ask the buyer how he/she wants it shipped, and if you live in a different country, any special instructions. If the buyer has not been asked, it is up to him to be aware of customs restrictions, postal rates and which methods cost more and e-mail the seller. Buyers who make sure the sellers know what they need to know minimize their own problems and make sure that they can get the comic without hassles or damage. They in turn can leave positive feedback for the seller, and will have no complaints.

FOLLOW UP

Leave enough time for the seller to ship the book before you start e-mailing him and asking "Where the hell is it?" Be polite in your e-mails. Expect delays if you've sent a personal check or if there are customs offices to cross. Be sure to check your e-mail regularly if you're completing a transaction and see if you have to answer a question or send an address. Also inform the other party (again as a courtesy and to keep things running smoothly) when you've sent payment or shipped an item. Many bidders also become sellers too and it's good to experience it from both sides, and see what others are up against. It makes you a better eBay'er.

EBAY vs. COMIC CONVENTIONS

Will eBay replace comic book conventions and back issue mail order houses? At the risk of sounding wishy-washy (again), yes and no. As a regular attendee (and sometime bio-writer for

their website) at The Motor City Con in Novi, Michigan, I have seen a change in this con in recent years and eBay could very well be the main cause. This con is one of the largest. There are two each year, and the spring con is much larger than the fall con. But there used to be a lot more of the smaller dealers; guys with little booths full of obscure stuff in filmy bags, who would drag you into their peanut-sized booth and offer you a deal. Sometimes I would find the best old comics at booths like these. Now, most of the smaller dealers are gone. I'm sure many, if not all of them, are selling on eBay or some other Internet auction.

Those of you who think it would be really neat to sell comic books for a living probably have never done a con as a dealer. To do the convention circuit and reach the highest number of customers that year, a dealer has to first book one or more tables months in advance, fight for a location for their tables that they believe will showcase their stock to its best advantage, and pay a large fee per table before the con opens. They have to pay for transportation, gas, hotels and food on the road, arrive at the convention hotel early enough in the morning to set up their stock before the con opens, usually with very little sleep; lug heavy boxes of comics around or pay a porter to do it; eat lousy fast food in the dealer's room while trying to make enough to cover the costs and enough profit per hour to justify all the work that they did to be there. That's not even including the organizing, grading and pricing of their stock beforehand, and the preparation of any advertising materials or catalogues they wish to give out to con patrons.

Instead, they can stay home, and for a small fee (eBay's fees are too complicated to list here), sell to people worldwide. Instead of just the few thousand that happen to be at a convention, your potential customers could include millions who might happen upon your auction. In many cases these are people the seller would never meet at a convention. The fees are *[continued on page 61]*



Milt Story, Art Carney and Mitch Miller mug with Milt's *Silly Sign Song* illustrations ca. 1956.

implementation of a Comics Code that prohibited both the half-dressed ladies of Abner's world and the mock-violence of Fosdick, may also have contributed to Milt's desire to leave. When Walt Kelly was looking for an assistant on *Pogo* in 1955, Milt decided that he would rather work in the daily production of a comic strip than spend nearly all of his time designing Capp products (which is what he was doing by the mid-1950s).

So Milt left Capp, and a secure job, for the more unsteady waters of the comic strip. And it was rough going indeed. All evidence points to Kelly and Milt not getting along. Milt lasted less than a year with Kelly before throwing in the towel. Exactly how much Milt did on this title is unknown, but it was working with *Pogo* that gave Milt more reasons to try again with a strip of his own creation. He decided that from then on, he was going to try and make it for himself, not work for someone else. This turned out to be a smart move, although not in a way he could have anticipated.

After leaving Capp and Kelly both within a very short period of time, Milt decided that his design skills might be better used in ways other than creating products out of other people's characters. So he began to develop his own line of creations, which he successfully sold as premiums to the major cereal manufacturers. The idea of putting something free in a box of cereal was a relatively new idea and Milt saw the opportunity. The result was that if you opened a box of cereal between the years 1956 and 1963, chances were pretty good that you got a Milt Story creation as your prize! He created *Tricky Titles* for Kellogg's Pep, *Eggheads* for Raisin Bran, and *Silly Signs* for Sugar Pops in the 1950s, as well as numerous *Captain Crunch* premiums in the early 1960s.

It was the *Silly Signs* that tickled the public fancy, with the first inkling of their success being that employees at the factory stole them! Punnage ran rampant in these reusable signs, with groaners like, "I Live by the Lake, Drop in!" For a brief time in the late 1950s, *Silly Signs* were everywhere, stuck onto all manner of things (good thing they were reusable and nonpermanent) by gleeful children and childish adults. They were so popular that Milt even got involved in writing a *Silly Signs Song* with Mitch Miller and sung by Art Carney (of

The Milton Story Story

Eight More Promo Comics Found!

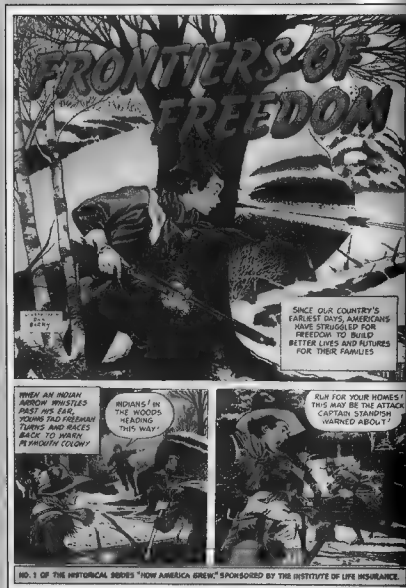
[continued from page 24]

the Story estate currently listed in the *Guide*; it is printed in only three colors (red, pink and black) on very cheap newsprint. Milt Story receives rare credit in the indicia for putting this together (guess Al Capp was in a generous mood).

Readability: Fosdick is his typically foolish self in a rather bland pitch for a charity cause. The fact that he spends most of the short story in conversation with a talking feather does not seem to faze him, nor his human/shmoo hybrid assistant Shmoozer, at all.

How America Grew (Frontiers of Freedom) (General Comics, Inc., 1950), #1, 8 pages (art by Dan Barry). Printed in full color on newsprint. Noted in indicia as being "No. 1 of the Historical Series 'How America Grew.' Sponsored (and distributed by) the 'Institute of Life Insurance.'" Dan

Barry, who ghosted for Burne Hogarth on *Tarzan* dailies from 1947-1949 and later (1951) took up the reigns of *Flash Gordon*, provides some top-notch art here from the period between his famous strips. **Readability:** Pretty good. Actually, despite the identity of the distributor, you are kind of surprised when this American history tale of generations of the Freeman family morphs into an ad for life insurance. Probably the excellent Barry art has something to do with this. Recommended on artistic merit alone.



The Story of Steel; The Story of Mass Production; The Story of Mass Assembly, (publisher unknown, nd, but clearly early 1950s based on kids' clothing), 8 pages each ("edited by Prof. Harvey Zorbaugh, Dept. of Educational Sociology, New York University, story by Frank Kolars, Instructor, School of Journalism, Hunter College") But they did not credit the [continued on page 59]



Milt Story and his many Li'l Abner and Shmoo products ca. 1949. From left to right, bottom row: Li'l Abner Braces (suspenders), **Al Capp's Shmoo Comics** #1-3, Shmoo clothing bag, Shmoo wall clock, Li'l Abner change purse, **The Life and Times of the Shmoo**, Shmoo charm on card, Shmoo western T-shirt, Shmoo and Li'l Abner socks; top row: Li'l Abner belt, Shmoo Russian doll, assorted Shmoo figurines and dolls, Li'l Abner glass, Shmoo Pops, Shmoo umbrella.

Special thanks to Milt Story's daughters, Nadia Marconi and Vida Story, for sharing their memories and memorabilia.

Honeymooners fame)!

Although Milt had success with the premium market, he never gave up on his goal of comic strip syndication. He placed his cartoon *Jeepers* in the *New York Herald-Tribune* but he never hit the syndicated jackpot. After the *Herald-Tribune* folded in 1966, taking *Jeepers* along with it, he gave up on the idea of a comic strip. He gradually migrated into another, more profitable, line of work designing plastic campaign buttons and campaign posters under the "Storyline" label for political conventions. Indeed, Milt believed that plastics were the wave of the future. His specialty was making banners with multiple uses, such as those which could be used as either hanging signs or tablecloths. He peddled his products at numerous political conventions, including the riotous Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968 and the hastily assembled Republican Convention in Miami in 1972, where he ran into Pat Nixon and knocked her down. Although officially of the Democratic persuasion, he was happy to offer his wares to both parties because, as his daughter Vida has indicated, "The Republicans paid the bills on time."

Unfortunately, Milt's later years were made difficult by a detached retina suffered due to a blow to the head in the early 1960s, which worsened during the late 1970s and into the 1980s, eventually combining with additional eye troubles and rendering him legally blind. Although he retired from designing, he never stopped working on clever new ideas, dutifully filing them away in a well-labeled cabinet in his house. He took up painting as well, chiefly American Indian themes, and, with the assistance of his daughter Vida, assembled laminated books of all his creative ideas from past years to preserve them for his grandchildren. Milt Story passed away July 21, 2002 of natural causes, but left a wonderful legacy through his numerous designs and illustrations, both of his own creation and for some of the most beloved comic strip characters. *Li'l Abner* may be gone from the papers, but he and the rest of Al Capp's creations live on in no small part due to the creative input of Milt Story. 🐔

*Chris Boyko has been collecting comic art, ECs, Silver Age Marvels and Dick Tracy memorabilia for the past 25 years and is running out of room. He has attended numerous auctions and buys and sells on eBay on a regular basis. He also edited the second edition of *The Comic Art Price Guide* by Jerry Weist.*

The Milton Story Story

Eight More Promo Comics Found!

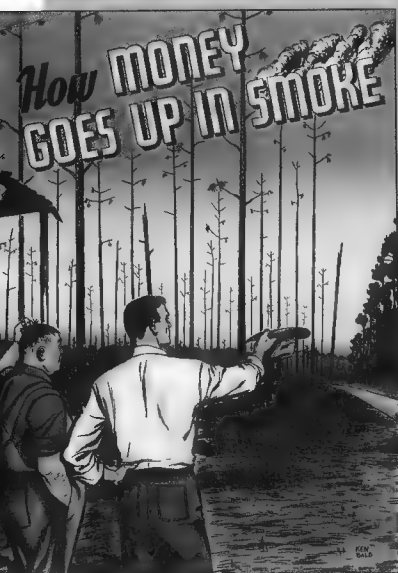
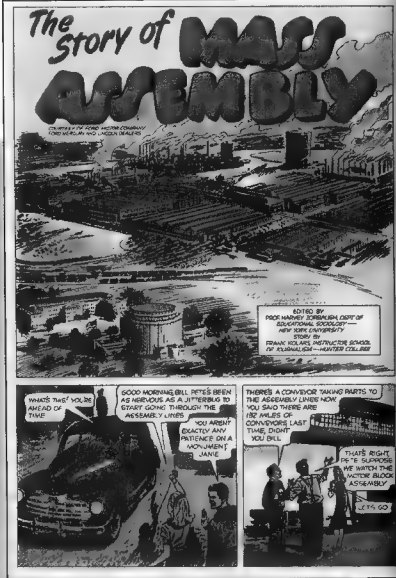
[continued from page 58]

artist!). Printed in full color on higher quality paper (art - clearly done on craft-tint paper which is unusual for a comic book). All the booklets in this clearly delineated trilogy were prepared for the students of the Detroit Public Schools as a supplement to their tours of the Ford Motor Plant in River Rouge, so their distribution was obviously quite limited.

Readability: Incredibly boring. Based on these scripts, one must conclude that manufacturing just is not all that much fun, while the art is competent but uninspired. All the characters seem to find it quite funny, however (they are constantly going "Ha Ha" and "Ho Ho"). They also say "Willikers" a lot.

How to Clock Up Extra Sales! (General Comics, Inc., 1950), 16 pages. Printed in full





color on newsprint. "Published in the interest of Telechron Electric Clocks Sales People Everywhere." Subtitled "Don Shows Debbie the 'Time' of Her Life" (a suggestive line if ever there was one). **Readability:** Full of goofy time-related puns, this is basically a "how to sell clocks to people who don't have enough of them" manual. Banter between Debbie and Don is vintage 1950s, right down to the discussion as to how many families in

your profits from tree sales, but still interesting (I think I could probably turn a profit farming trees with all the info provided here if I didn't live in an apartment). Solid art, with some nice fire-fighting panels. However, it is probably best to ignore the advice about combating insects with DDT.

Adventures Inside the Atom (Pictorial Media, Inc., 1948), 16 pages. Printed in full color on pulp paper. Distributed by General Electric Company. **Readability:** That this is a 1948 comic is never in doubt; with the thick brush lines in the inking it has a very 1940s feel about it. The story is bluntly educational, from ancient Greece to 1948, covering the discoveries of the secrets of the atom. However, it does name names and give facts on how to build nuclear reactors, which is kind of remarkable for a comic coming out less than three years after Hiroshima. (I think North Korea has at least one copy of this book.) Many accurate predictions of future uses of atomic energy (creating new elements, curing disease, building atomic submarines), but some of the discussed applications of atomic power never materialized. The panel showing Eskimos using a TV, fan, electric clock (I think you Telechron!), lights,



"wired" homes have electric clocks. The fact that only 33 million homes in 1950 had electricity is kind of stunning, but that only 1/3 had a kitchen clock?! Wow! Artwork is also vintage 1950s, not even suggesting anything more than a two-dimensional world (full of 2D clocks, of course).

How Money Goes Up In Smoke (General Comics, Inc., 1950), 16 pages. Printed in full color on slick paper. Distributed by the International Paper Company, Mobile, Alabama (likely with limited distribution). Art by Ken Bald who later drew *Dr. Kildare* in 1963 and *Dark Shadows* in 1971 (as Ken Bruce). **Readability:** Good! First half is full of lots of action as bumbling Ed Dean lets his brush fire get out of control and almost burns down his house. Second half is a rather lecturish spiel on the value of preventing forest fires so as to maximize



model train, and toaster inside(!) their igloo is a good example. Cover art is very good, but the best panel is the last one on the penultimate page: "Hold on Johnny... you've been reading too many comics!" The final panel shows Ed and Johnny walking towards a pavilion reading "Things to Come" in a nice nod to H. G. Wells.

It's a Great Life Again—Now that I've Licked TB! (Pictorial Media, Inc., 1951), 4 pages. Printed in four colors on slick paper, but the four colors are black, gray, maroon and brown, which makes for one ugly color scheme! Distributed by the National Tuberculosis Association. **Readability:** A hoot! Classic weirdly stilted 1950s era dialogue makes *Leave it to Beaver* sound slick. Gives the impression that getting TB is actually a pretty laid back experience (plus you get a break from your job and family at the sanitarium). Best line: "It'll be great to be a full-time man again!"

So there you have nine stellar examples of early promotional comics. Sure, the subject matter tends to run on the dull side, but often the art, and sometimes the goofy dialogue, make up for it! Keep on the lookout for undiscovered promo comics and, if you find some, share it with the world! 🐼



eBay: The Alternative

[continued from page 57]

usually minimal, the shipping cost is generally covered by the bidder and most comic dealers do mail order anyway.

But there will always be those who are leery of sending money through the mail or giving out their credit card numbers, or who want pristine copies and won't trust the condition unless they can inspect the book personally. And for those people, though they will save on shipping charges and mailing hassles, they will pay an admission charge to get into the con and will have to pay con prices. CGC-slabbed books selling on eBay increase the trust factor for bidders, because they don't have to worry about inexperienced sellers who might over grade a book. Though there is usually a scan, it may not show all the defects, and some sellers have been known to misidentify books, listing wrong titles or numbers or erroneous artist information. But unslabbed books on eBay often sell for half of *Guide* or less, even with shipping prices added. Even lower grade slabbed comics are sometimes an incredible bargain. And mainstream comics, except for rare key issues, usually don't go for much on eBay, or don't sell at all. It's obscure books, even unslabbed, that sometimes fetch multiples of *Guide* on eBay. And these are often the very books that, despite their scarcity, will rarely find a buyer at a convention, where old Marvels and DCs still sell in droves. These, I feel, are the divisions that will keep both cons and eBay sellers able to find their audience.

Lastly, there is an excitement of participating in an auction, especially if it's for something you really want, and this spirit of competition and desire is what drives prices up. Unlike a live auction, you never know how many people you're bidding against, or how high they are willing to go. And you have the same advantage over them. There's fun in being an eBay bidder and easy money to be made as a seller. It is perhaps these factors more than any others that have made it a success. 🐼

Cover Re-Creations

[continued from page 54]

the start of the "modern" comic, I got into the quest of non-DC and non-Timely esoterica. *Whirlwind Comics*, *Banner*, *Rocket*—I found myself mesmerized by the vitality, energy and derivative nature of the explosion of this story-telling medium. I enthusiastically collected across a wide range of Golden Age gems in the time period of 1938-1943. I then treaded into the wild world of collecting (if you can find them) art from this time period.

But for me something was missing—yeah, it would be great to have a GA cover (if you can find one, let alone afford one). Yes, I love the stark beauty of the inked page before it is diluted and emasculated by the coloring process. However, at its base, comic books are four colored wonders. As kids (and adults for that matter) we were drawn to those books by their garishly colored covers. It was the intention of the publisher to grab the attention (and thus the dimes) of American children by the visual feast for the eyes. The cover was the first advertisement for their attention. Content and color were the tools to attract and divide dime from child. So, what about color covers of these books? Tough task indeed. I think my real introduction was at the first Sotheby auction in 1991. I was going to bid on some comic books. I was invited to the opening and as I walked up the stairs, there it was—*Marvel Mystery Comics* #15 by Alex Schomburg. Well, it nearly jumped off the wall at me. Boldly colored and oversized it just overwhelmed me. At that auction, I "digressed" and diverted from my "focused collecting agenda," and became the proud owner of this treasure.

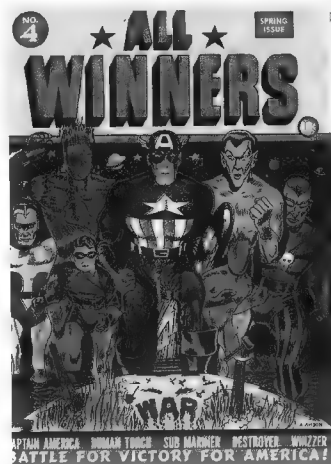
I never gave obtaining cover re-creations much thought. It was during my years at San Diego Con starting in 1992 that I met some of the GA legends. It was here that I found many of the shining stars of the Silver Age of Comics had distinguished careers as young kids in the Golden Age. Slowly, almost as a non-conscious thought, I would note that the Jim Mooney of Supergirl and Marvel fame produced early work—and, yes, covers in the Golden Age. Okay, while *Super-Mystery Comics*, *Banner Comics*, *Our Flag Comics* and *Lightning*

Comics for Ace Periodicals may not be remembered well these days, Jim *did* do some wonderful work as a novice nineteen- and twenty-year old. Over several years, I had Jim "re-create" for me classic covers such as *Our Flag* #2, *Banner* #3, *Super-Mystery* 2/5 and *Lightning Comics* #3/1 (yes, *Lightning Comics*).

The problem with collecting Golden Age art is that you do not so much collect it but find what is available. Does it exist or not, who knows? Indeed, I was not the first to commission cover re-creations from the Golden Age. Sure, the Schomburg covers produced for *Collectors Showcase* in the early 1980s are well known, as are C.C. Beck re-creations of his own work and others, and Flessel re-creations. Shelly Moldoff has been a regular factory, oft-times making multiple copies of covers. Frankly, once I got bit by the bug, it was anyone's guess what was out there. Got an Ed Ashe *Top Notch Comics* #3 (poster size) through the comic grapevine, as well as a true gem of Dan Zolnerowich re-creation of his *Planet Comics* #14, far surpassing his original. Fortunate to obtain Al Avison re-creation of *All Winners* #4. The secondary market purchases can be fun as one obtains C.C. Beck doing not a Timely or *Silver Streak* cover but his own re-creation of *Whiz Comics* #1.

But the true joy—started far too late—is stalking (as my son puts it) octogenarians such as Joe Simon (*Champion Comics* #8 and *Mystic Comics* #7), Bob Lubbers (*Arrow Comics* #1—yes, a Centaur cover—*Wings Comics* #87 and #89), Bob Fujitani (*Pep Comics* #34, *Hangman Comics* #8) to do commissions for me. Part of the challenge is not only finding the artist, but the covers he did. I have had George Tuska do *Bullseye* #12 and *Jungle* #13 for me. Keeping my ears open I learned by chatting with old time artists that attribution of *Mystery Men Comics* #6 and *Weird Comics* #1, long attributed to Lou Fine, were actually done by a young George Tuska. George not only confirmed that they were indeed his covers but he looked forward to working on them. His pleasure became my treasure.

In all cases, I found the artists gracious and flattered to do the work. In fact, artists



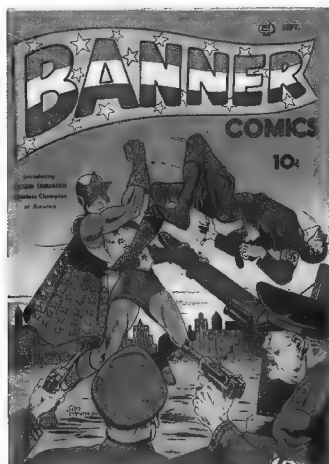
All Winners #4 (Spring 1942)



Marvel Mystery Comics #15 (Jan 1941)



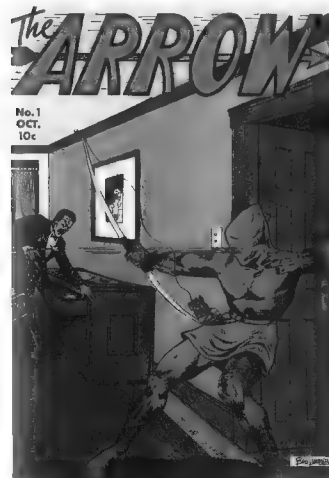
Weird Comics #1 (Apr 1940)



Banner Comics #3 (Sep 1941)



Pep Comics #34 (Dec 1942)



Arrow Comics #1 (Oct 1940)

**Planet
Comics #14
(Sep 1941)**



such as
Tuska and
Mooney took
pleasure in
revisiting and

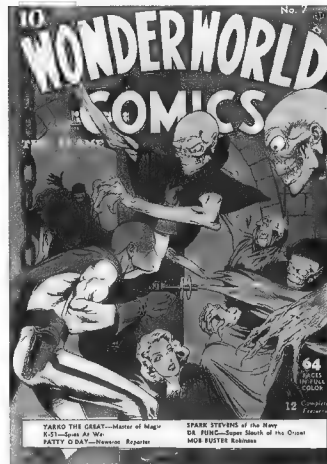
re-creating their Golden Age work, rather than the multiple requests for their more well-known Silver Age work.

I have a number of the Lou Fine cover recreations done by Murphy Anderson. *Mystery Men Comics* #3 (my favorite cover of all time), *Wonderworld Comics* #7, *Fantastic Comics* #3 and *Science Comics* #1. These are obvious labors of love, as Murphy pays homage to his idol. The painstaking attention to detail and the nuances of the colors ranks these re-creations as some of the most finely produced re-creations ever produced. Murphy was so flattered by my early acquisition (and suggestions of Fine covers) that he asked if he could stop by my house when in the area so that he could personally inscribe them to me.

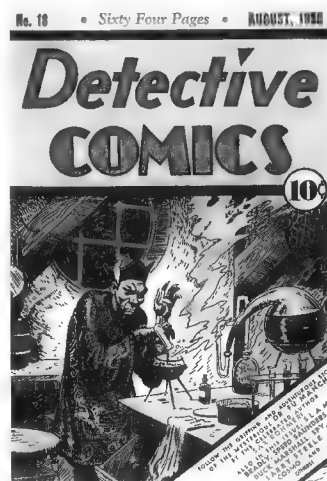
Take a step back and think actually what these works are. These young men—often teenagers—were there at the dawn of comics, as the art form and story-telling medium was groping for form and substance. Bristling with unbridled energy, many of these covers reflected the oncoming storm of World War II. Sixty years later these creators, filled with the same special energy that got them into this industry in the first place, are only too happy to conjure up memories of this bygone area that was part of their youth.

Re-creations are often times overlooked and viewed as some sort of gimmick, many questioning the manner and process that leads to their creation. Poppydoodle! Joe Simon doing Joe Simon. Alex Schomburg doing Alex Schomburg. Mooney, Tuska, Lubbers, Fujitani doing their thing with covers classic unto themselves. I do not care what the process of creation is. It does not get any better than this—to have these greats impart a bit of comic history to me.

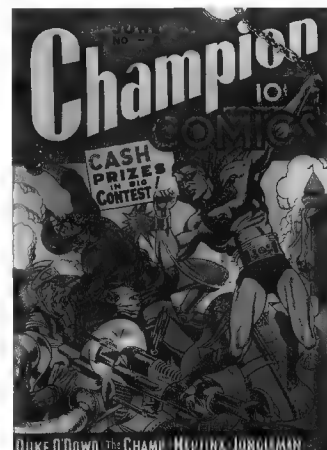
So for your consideration, you may want to re-consider re-creations. 



Wonderworld Comics #7 (Nov 1939)



Detective Comics #38 (Aug 1938)



Champion Comics #8 (Jun 1940)

George Pratt Interview

[continued from page 35]

CBM: Tell us about the film *Artists at the Front*. Was this a project that came about because of your *Enemy Ace*/WWI research (or vice versa)?

Pratt: This is the new documentary that I'm working on with the same partners I had on *See You In Hell, Blind Boy*, the documentary we did which won Best Feature Documentary at the New York International Independent Film Festival. The film is a work in progress. Steve Budlong, the director of the blues documentary, called and asked me if I wanted to do another film. Of course I said yes. The first film was an incredible learning experience for me and there's plenty I would love to do in film. We decided to do another documentary, this one on one of my heroes, Harvey Dunn. Harvey Dunn was one of the original students of Howard Pyle, the father of American Illustration. Dunn was in the same class as N.C. Wyeth, who was Best Man at Dunn's wedding. Dunn was one of eight artists contacted by the government (chosen by James Montgomery Flagg and Charles Gibson) to go "Over There" and illustrate the war for America. Though there were plenty of cameras then, it was seen as a fairly mechanical eye, not something which would leave a "human" document; thus the artists. Dunn immediately accepted and, after being commissioned as a Captain in the Army, went to war. He had a special box designed that he wore around his neck, and which contained rolls of paper that could be cranked through a window.

The artists could choose their area of operations and were given carte blanche to go where they wished. Dunn went into



the trenches with the soldiers, (Marines, I believe) and even went "over the top" during battles. His work, at least in my mind, is the most powerful of the eight who went there. His work is less voyeuristic than the others and puts you in the battles. He gave a face to the soldiers in the field. Just beautiful and extremely powerful work, most of which has been hidden in drawers since the early twenties at the Smithsonian Institution. We did do one shoot so far at the Smithsonian, filming them doing conservation work on the Dunn pieces. The work is in very good shape considering its age. They had his box, they had the rolls from the box, and the large charcoal renderings he did as studies for paintings, which he never got to do. My interest in Harvey Dunn precedes my research on *Enemy Ace*, but was furthered by the research. Dunn's WWI work is wonderful and very memorable.

CBM: I saw on your website that you are doing a *Haunted Tank* hardcover for DC (with writer Brian Azzarello). What is the status of this project?

Pratt: *Haunted Tank* is, I think, still a real project, but we have not started work on the book. Brian is swamped with other work at DC and I'm busy on *Solo* for DC right now. Perhaps we'll begin soon, but I really don't know.

CBM: You took a very mature look at *Enemy Ace* in your graphic novel and added new dimension to a DC character that already had several layers more to him than most comic book characters. What can you tell us about how the characters from this series will be portrayed in this novel?

Pratt: *The Haunted Tank* is entirely Brian's idea and I was flattered that he asked me to illustrate the book. We've not spoken at length about the project, but Brian has told me the plot which I think is very interesting and revealing.

CBM: Given your study of military history and your status





in the comic book industry, are there any other military characters we can expect to see you tackling in the future? I would think, given the work you did on *Enemy Ace*, a Blackhawk graphic novel would be a natural.

Pratt: I do have a short story about Sgt. Rock in my *Solo* book, which will be fun to do. Other than that there are no existing characters that I'm thinking of doing. I did have an idea for a Sgt. Fury graphic novel that Axel Alonso was interested in at one point, but we haven't pursued it. Scott Hampton and I also pitched a Sgt. Rock graphic novel to follow up the Azzarello/Kubert book, but never heard back from DC. We had what we thought was a very strong idea for Rock that would push him as a character and throw him out of his element, force him to struggle a bit.

CBM: What about your involvement with the Gabor Barabas collection, *Find Me a Voice*—how did you come on board for that project?

Pratt: Gabor approached me during my work on *Enemy Ace: War Idyll* to illustrate his poems about the Holocaust. Gabor's grandparents died in Auschwitz, his parents escaped Auschwitz and he was smuggled out of Hungary as a baby. The poems are intense, and rather than simply illustrate his poems I wanted to do my own take on the Holocaust and we'd put the two together. I approached the work as mostly a printmaking project, though I've produced a number of oils as well. The work has been executed in monotypes, rubbercuts, linoleum block prints and etchings. The work has been extremely gratifying, exciting and a great growing process for me. We're still looking for a publisher for the book. Gabor has since written the poems into a larger play which has been performed Off Broadway and in various cities in the country. It's a very moving play, the music and songs all written by Gabor, his wife Suzanne, and her brother Merrick Royce. It's really wonderful.

CBM: Going back to one of our earlier questions regarding what you bring to each artistic outlet, and a subject you mentioned before, let's talk about *See You in Hell Blind Boy: A Tale of the Blues*. Now, this is a text novel that will also include your photographs, illustrations, comics and recordings. Tell us about this project, both what it is about and how did this one come about? Also, as the creator, what were the joys and the pitfalls of being able to showcase all your talents in one project?

Pratt: *See You in Hell, Blind Boy* came about during my work on *Enemy Ace: War Idyll*. I was hard at work on that first novel and so my one comfort was music. CDs had just started coming out and I finally scratched enough dough together to buy a player and start feeding that monster. I would visit Tower Records all the time and haunt the Folk section of the store.

The store was still mostly vinyl, but I was digging through the CDs constantly for new material, and to get all my favorite John Renbourn guitar music, and Cat Stevens, Jethro Tull, etc. I was up there one night and heard some of the most inspiring guitar of my life, and the voice and lyrics were wonderfully soothing and moving. It wasn't something I recognized at all, so I asked the guy at the counter who it was. He told me Mississippi John Hurt. I was hooked. I bought everything they had on John Hurt, maybe two CDs, and took them home and wore them out. I couldn't get over this wonderful music, and decided right then that I had to do something with the blues.

That's how it began. Of course I began to get inspired by more of the bluesmen from the past. I was especially hooked on the country blues, acoustic blues all from the Mississippi Delta,





fine, that's exciting, that's true artistic freedom.

Originally Kevin Eastman was going to publish the book but then he sold *Tundra* and got out of publishing altogether, with the exception of the *Turtles* and *Heavy Metal*. I was

approached by Steven Budlong to do a documentary on *Enemy Ace*. Steve is Vice President of Media Services for CitiCorp and was interested in how I handled history in that book. At the time though, I was so burned out on the war material that I begged off on the war aspect and pushed instead to follow the progress of the blues book, *See You in*

Hell, Blind Boy. Steve went for it and that's how I got into doing documentaries. It's been a fantastic learning experience for me. We will be getting the rights back to the film soon and will be releasing it as a DVD with loads of extra material. I'm excited about that.

But the book is sort of in stasis. I'm still looking for a publisher, but the writing is complete, and the sequential aspects have all been

laid out. I took piles of photographs during my trips into the Mississippi Delta as well as recordings. It's a very multilayered project, very rich. The film did very well on the festival circuit, we won Best Feature Documentary at the New York International Independent Film Festival, and it's always gratifying to see the audience reaction when it's shown. I think the warmth and conviction of the people we met down there really comes through in the film and everyone that sees it gets to know the players well. I think it leaves you with a pretty good feeling for the spirit of that music and the individuals that play it and live it.

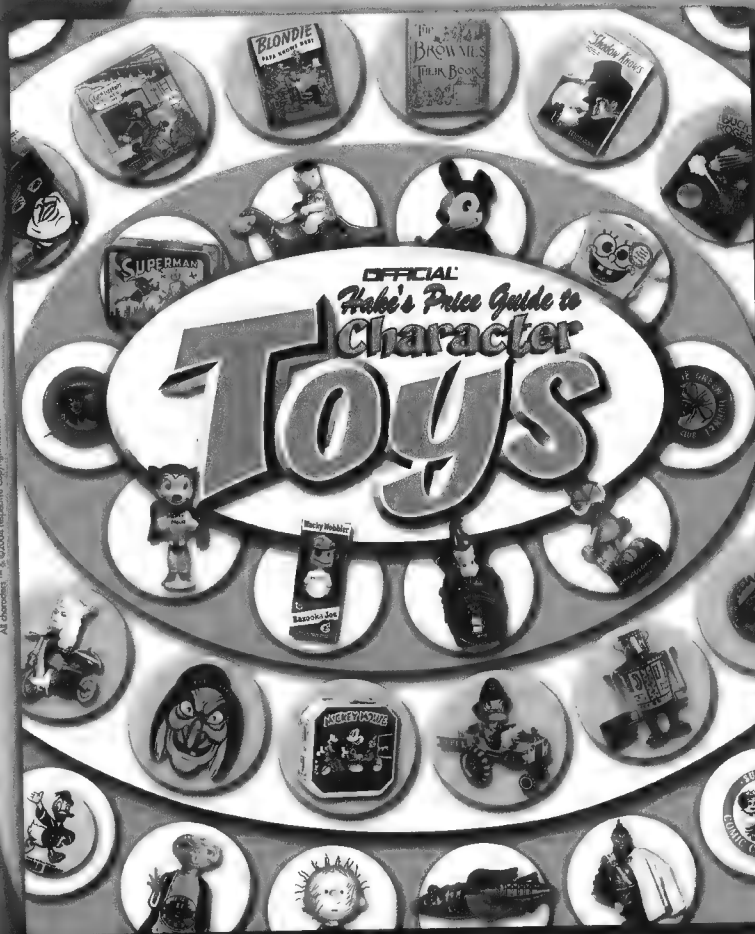
The joy for me is being able to do what I do. I'm lucky enough, or hard-headed enough to drag my enjoyment of things with me and make them part of my work. The books that I've done all have at their heart things that I'm intensely interested in personally: the First World War, Vietnam, the Country Blues, Japan, etc. The fun is finding ways of distilling my interest and sharing it with others, trying to turn others on to the things that I find interesting.

Comic Book Marketplace would like to thank George Pratt again for taking the time to talk with us about his career. To learn more about the projects that were discussed in this interview, and to learn more about the artist, we encourage our readers to visit www.georgepratt.com.



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I feel the tingle of—Spider Cents!

We know that *Spider-Man 2* set opening-day record film grosses of \$40.5 million and was the biggest box office for any movie on its opening day. The first-day U.S.-Canadian haul for *Spider-Man 2* topped the previous opening-day record of \$39.4 million, set by the original *Spider-Man* movie, which made its debut on a Friday in May 2002.

Fueled by glowing reviews and a built-in fan base generated from the success of the first film, the highly promoted sequel also shattered the previous record Wednesday opening, set by *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, which debuted with \$34.5 million. While *Spider-Man 2* now holds the opening-day record, the computer-animated *Shrek 2* remains the single-day box-office champion with the \$44.8 million it grossed on Saturday, May 22.

GADS!—even politicians have jumped on the Spider-Wagon.

Dateline—Providence Rhode Island: In a move that has gotten the attention of U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch has made Spider-Man's credo his administration's "official credo." At a ceremony held on July 1st in front of the attorney general's office, crowds gathered on South Main Street to hear what Lynch had to say about life, criminal prosecution and—Spider-Man.

A brass plaque bearing the inscription "With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility," Uncle Ben's legendary advice to Peter Parker has been mounted on the building to the right of the main entrance.

The day's festivities and Lynch's new slogan are intended to reflect his administration's self-proclaimed emphasis

on juvenile justice. The plaque was made possible by private donations and contributions—no state funds were used.

Since the Attorney General's department was created by England's King William in 1650, attorneys general have traditionally adopted official administrative slogans; inspirational sayings intended to focus the energies of an office which routinely deals with crime and criminals.

"I am a product of the MTV generation," Lynch explained, and "with all due respect to King William and William Blake, I've chosen Spider-Man's credo." Lynch said he was inspired to use the quote when his five-year-old son tugged on his pant leg as he ascended the statehouse dais to take the oath of office, uttering the immortal words of Uncle Ben. At a meeting of the National Association of Attorneys General in Santa Monica, California U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft reportedly inquired, "General Lynch, is it true what they tell me about you and Spider-Man?" Wake me up, puh-lease!

And, just when you think you cannot get enough, it's Spider-Man versus Hindu Demon! Spider-Man will put on a sarong and fight the bad guys through the auto-rickshaw-clogged streets of Mumbai in an Indian version of the Old Web Slinger. Peter Parker will be replaced by Pavitr Prabhakar who gets his crime-fighting powers from a Hindu holy man. Instead of fighting Spider-Man's nemesis the Green Goblin, Pavitr will wage battle against Rakshasa, a demon in Hindu lore. The first of four issues of the Indian superhero will come out in August and aims to reach five million readers. The Indian Spider-Man, whose girlfriend will be not Mary but Maya, will swing across Mumbai landmarks such as the Gateway of India monument and the Taj Mahal luxury hotel.

"Unlike traditional translations of American comics, Spider-Man India will

become the first ever 'transcreation,' where we reinvent the origin of a Western property like Spider-Man so that he is an Indian boy in Mumbai dealing with local problems and challenges," said Devarajan, chief of Gotham Entertainment Group, the Indian licensee of US Marvel Comics.

Slabbed sales of *Spider-Man*: #1 VF/NM \$26,500, #1 VG/FN \$2950, #1 VG+ \$3400, #1 VG \$2115, #1 VG \$1886, #1 VG- \$1520; *Amazing Fantasy* #15 slabbed 4.5 VG+ \$3400 and a 4.0 VG \$3050.

Joe and Nadia Mannarino's All-Star Auctions had another banner event with their end of May auction. Some of the original art that sold included: Winsor McCay *Little Nemo in Slumberland* \$16,799; *Snow White* cel \$11,200; Herriman *Krazy Kat* art \$9156; *Sleeping Beauty* original art \$8569; *Fantasia* cel \$5319; Foster *Prince Valiant* Sunday page \$4480; McCay *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* original art \$4400; Mingo *MAD Special* #15 original art \$3416; Baker *Fight* #55 complete 6 page story original art \$3359; Kelly *Pogo* hand colored Sunday page \$2968; Capp *Li'l Abner* Sunday page \$2821; Frazetta *Li'l Abner* Sunday page \$2799; Sekowsky *Brave and Bold* #30 page 7 \$2375; Archie Sunday page 11/20/61 \$660; Kaluta *Brave and Bold* #35 page 7 \$2305; Neal Adams *Phantom Stranger* #16 cover \$6000.

In addition to the original art, there were some fabulous examples of square bound beauties from the Bill Howard collection. I've been telling you about these for months—now see what new records they've set! *Baby Huey Duckland* #1 (Harvey file copy) 9.4 \$409; *Fantasy Masterpieces* #8 9.4 \$85; *Superman* #202 9.8 \$844; *Jimmy Olsen* #104 9.6 \$337; *JLA* #76 (Winnepeg) 9.6 \$376; *Casper Ghostland* #14 9.4 (File copy) \$164; *Spooky Spook Town* #1 NM+ \$731; *Donald Duck Fun Book* #2 NM \$1777. Also sold at the All Star event were [continued on page 76]



A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action			Batman			Detective			Sensation			#86 VF	\$21	49%
#24 GD+	\$304	1.02X	#3 GD	\$710	86%	#71 VG	\$150	53%	#30 FN	\$190	83%	#91 VF	\$20	47%
#26 GD	\$355	1.43X	#7 GD	\$220	52%	#76 VG	\$325	98%	#55 GD	\$100	2.4X	Tales To Astonish		
#41 FN	\$305	79%	#10 VG	\$358	52%	#78 GD	\$110	96%	#66 VG	\$67	84%	#1 VG+	\$338	1.23X
#62 VG	\$202	90%	#12 VG	\$390	67%	Fantastic Four			#78 VG	\$130	1.63X	#12 VF/NM	\$234	82%
#65 VG	\$139	76%	#14 VG	\$420	67%	#3 GD	\$145	71%	#79 VG	\$100	1.25X	Wonder Woman		
#75 FN	\$228	97%	#16 VG	\$490	49%	#11 FN	\$150	71%	#100 VG	\$123	1.12X	#4 VG	\$218	65%
#95 FN	\$170	81%	#18 VG	\$570	1.02X	#19 GD	\$30	86%	Strange Tales			#25 GD+	\$100	1.16X
#97 GD	\$86	1.23X	#19 FN	\$330	57%	#28 VF	\$280	1.20X	#95 VG	\$17	57%	#86 FN	\$150	1.61X
#106 FN	\$84	45%	#21 VG	\$203	67%	#30 FN	\$37	65%	#123 VF	\$46	84%	#100 VG-	\$100	1.72X
#115 VG	\$73	59%	#30 FN	\$357	78%	#45 FN	\$36	75%	#127 VF	\$26	52%	X-Men		
All-Flash			#34 FN	\$160	48%	#48 VF	\$370	68%	#129 NM-	\$51	60%	#1 GD	\$425	67%
#19 GD	\$60	81%	#36 VG+	\$158	71%	#48 VF/NM	\$405	43%	#154 VF/NM	\$26	50%	#4 VF/NM	\$500	51%
#26 VG	\$165	1.37X	#37 GD+	\$150	99%	#52 VG+	\$17	39%	#167 NM-	\$29	36%	#16 VG+	\$23	72%
#29 VG	\$140	1.17X	#40 FN	\$380	83%	Hulk			Sub-Mariner (SA)			#17 FN	\$51	1.06X
All Star			#44 VG-	\$253	83%	#102 NM-	\$169	52%	Superman			#18 VG	\$21	66%
#15 GD	\$180	75%	#74 VG	\$90	74%	Human Torch			#13 VG	\$450	1.04	#22 FN	\$25	64%
#31 GD	\$120	Guide	Captain America			#13 VG+	\$622	1.80X	#25 VG	\$361	1.41X	#23 GD	\$12	92%
#36 GD	\$200	73%	#18 VFrest	\$265	13%	#15 GD	\$148	86%	#29 FN	\$315	88%	#24 FN	\$26	67%
#38 GD	\$200	1.17X	#20 FN	\$620	78%	Jimmy Olsen			#31 VG	\$164	82%	#26 FN	\$20	51%
Amazing Spider-Man			#23 VG	\$515	1.04X	#14 VG	\$62	1.19X	#37 VG	\$265	1.32X	#29 VG+	\$17	65%
#6 VG	\$168	55%	#26 VGrest	\$402	87%	#17 GD	\$16	62%	#38 VG	\$120	60%	#32 VG	\$11	55%
#8 VG	\$119	60%	#50 VG+	\$248	94%	#20 VG	\$40	77%	#39 VG	\$202	1.01X	#34 VG+	\$13	65%
#14 VG	\$255	77%	#78 GD	\$152	1.52X	#22 FN	\$52	99%	#42 VG	\$168	1.05X	#35 VG+	\$25	66%
#14 VG	\$305	92%	#100 VF-	\$128	56%	#23 FN	\$45	88%	#43 FN	\$225	94%	#41 NM-	\$70	61%
#25 VF	\$204	88%	Conan			#51 FN	\$15	63%	#55 GD	\$92	1.35X	#49 NM-	\$110	96%
#26 VF	\$212	86%	#1 GD	\$55	2.5X	#52 VG	\$10	63%	#59 GD	\$68	1.03X	#55 NM	\$80	64%
#51 VF/NM	\$164	72%	#1 VF	\$93	60%	#61 FN	\$13	72%	#61 VG	\$280	1.01X	#61 FN	\$15	56%
Daredevil			Avengers			#69 VF-	\$21	49%	#73 GD	\$133	2.15X	#76 FN	\$8	42%
#1 FN	\$610	99%	#5 FN	\$102	1.17X	#101 NM-	\$22	63%	#82 VG	\$60	1.13X	#80 VG	\$8	63%
#3 VF/NM	\$290	63%	#8 VF	\$51	32%	#107 VF/NM	\$11	39%	#84 GD	\$40	75%	#81 VG	\$10	83%
#9 VG+	\$30	Guide	#21 VF	\$25	45%	#109 NM-	\$13	37%	Tales of Suspense			#95 FN	\$35	69%
#12 VF-	\$60	92%	#35 VF	\$40	1.05X	#111 VF/NM	\$12	43%	#3 FN	\$228	1.46X	#96 VG+	\$21	1.05X
#24 NM	\$55	85%	#43 VF	\$20	61%	#112 NM-	\$13	37%	#7 FN	\$150	1.39X	#98 VG	\$10	31%
#32 NM	\$62	1.24X	#52 VF+	\$17	50%	#115 NM-	\$29	83%	#33 VF-	\$76	58%	#100 VG	\$16	73%
#40 FN-	\$25	2.08X	#57 VF/NM	\$79	61%	Journey Into Mystery			#40 GD	\$81	65%	#101 VG	\$38	1.9X
#51 VF/NM	\$28	70%	Journey Into Mystery			#73 FN-	\$93	86%	#74 VF	\$18	42%			
						#83 VG	\$660	83%	#77 VF	\$19	44%			

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Vintage comics, and the comic-book and comic-strip art, seem to be gaining a wider audience with each passing month. More of the obscure titles, including some that used to be considered unsellable, are getting requested. Moreover, the strengthening of the foreign currencies against the dollar has a higher percentage of the items finding new homes in Canada and overseas. This could portend a growing scarcity in the domestic market, as most collectibles that travel abroad don't return to their American roots.

These indicators, coupled with the popularity of comic-book heroes at box offices worldwide, and soaring toy/merchandise revenue from such hot franchises, assures continued strength for the foreseeable future. Particularly when record prices for top-graded copies continues to be the norm.

Nevertheless, there are still plenty of great bargains to be found for collectors of any and all budgets, assuming one doesn't insist on owning the finest graded copy! Ditto for the art. If you cannot afford a Kirby Silver Age cover, then an interior page is always much less; and if that's too high, then look for one that doesn't feature the lead character. Still too pricey? Then perhaps drop down to a Bronze Age *Our Fighting Forces* page. Still too much money, you say? Then watch for the occasional *Captain Victory* page, or other such later fare! This example can be applied to virtually any medium one collects.

I'll spare you busy CBM readers the details of sales of the mundane

crapulence, which makes up a good chunk of the transactions that occur in any given week. Mixed in, a few noteworthy items found their way into new collections: *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 GD \$44, #135 FN \$20; *The Beyond* #10 VG/FN \$55; *Bobby Benson* #4 (Spider Cvr) VG/FN \$28; *Chamber Of Chills* #1 (Marvel) VF+ Circle-8 \$40; *Ghostly Tales* #162 FN+ \$8; *Nova* #1 NM- \$13; *Secrets of Sinister House* #11 VF+ \$13; *Superman* #251 NM- 9.2 Circle-8 \$75.

While some in the hobby assume that Valiant comics are just a footnote in comic history, relegated to tales of quick gains and losses of more than a decade ago, we are enjoying renewed interest in the quality material by this short-lived publisher. While many of the books only sell at prices below original cover price, that is not the case for the pre-unity material, and the scarcer later issues published after all the speculators had fled in horror as the bottom dropped out at the start of 1993. Here are but a few samples of some of the surprising Valiant sales in recent weeks: *Archer and Armstrong* #0 Gold \$25; *Eternal Warrior* #1 Gold "flat" variant \$26; *Harbinger* #0 pink send-away version \$70; *HARDCorps* #1 Gold \$25; *Unity* #1 Gold \$20, #0 Red \$50.

When you can sell material from literally every decade of the life of the medium, it's good to be a comics dealer, indeed! Of course, the CGC graded material continues to be strong. Some of the CGC books we've sold lately include: *Bunny* #4 CGC 8.5 Circle-8 \$75; *Captain Savage* #5 CGC 9.2 \$50; *Marvel Super-Heroes* #1 (1st Marvel 1-Shot) CGC 9.4 \$250; *Mysteries Of Scotland Yard* #1 CGC 8.5 Circle-8 \$185; *Thor* #150 CGC 9.2 \$100.

Comic book and comic strip art is popular, and difficult to predict, as some items that seem like an easy sale may

stagnate, while others sell instantly and at higher than expected prices. Some samples of recent line art sales include: *DC Super-Stars* #5 (Final Page/with Flash/1976) \$70; *Li'l Brother Hugo* assorted daily strips, 1960s, \$35 apiece; Robert Williams convention sketch \$25; *Sad Sack* #60 (1955/1-page gag story) \$80; *Sad Sack* "Sarge" 1967 1-pager \$55; *Sgt. Rock* #416 pg. 14, nice Rock vs Nazi battle page \$60; *Unknown Soldier* #246 pg \$45; *Whiz* #136 complete 6-page Ibis story (1950) \$750.

The DC cover production art from the Jack Adler Collection just keeps on truckin' as well. Here are some of the noteworthy pieces that churned lately: *All Star Western* #9 Hand-colored Cover \$170; *DC 100-page Super-Spectacular* #19 (Tarzan) Hand-colored Cover \$190; *Ghosts* #19 Hand-Colored Cover with matching Approval Cover \$250; *House Of Mystery* #177 Approval Cover (Neal Adams Signed) \$175, #178 Approval Cover \$140, #187 Approval Cover (Neal Adams Signed) \$170; *Justice League Of America* #52 Approval Cover \$150; *Our Army At War* #273 Hand-Colored Cover \$170; *Secrets Of Sinister House* #6 Approval Cover \$110; *Swamp Thing* #8 Approval Cover \$150; *Tarzan* #227 Hand-Colored Cover \$200; *The Unexpected* #109 Approval Cover \$100; *Weird War Tales* #23 Approval Cover \$115.

In addition to these cash sales, the Adler pieces continue to be the most requested items from those who trade with us. In other words, many more such covers are leaving us in exchange for back-issue comics and original art—usually stuff we need for customers. As I don't normally like to part with such irreplaceable merchandise unless I have to!

I encourage those of you who are waiting around for prices to come down on vintage material to go ahead and buy

what you like when you see it, as I expect prices to continue their climb! And don't be afraid to get a lesser copy of that elusive book, as you can always upgrade it, if you find a nicer one at a later date. (And you can often shift off that old 'reader copy' on eBay, to recoup some of the cost of the new acquisition!)

Thanks for listening, and best wishes in all your collecting endeavors.

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We're acquiring old comics! Something that does not happen often enough through our store. Stuck in a corner of the country we tend to feel alone all but five days of the year. Of course, the San Diego-International Comic-Con briefly changes that!

We work hard to search out interesting collections for resale through our store. My partner, Gino, has a sixth sense for finding worthwhile comics to buy (a few of you have seen his talent in effect at the Comic-Con). For years we've run the gamut of methods and venues for comic book acquisition. From small shows to large ones. From print ads to on-line enticements. From close contacts to friends of friends. From swap meet rats to other dealers. All have yielded various bounties. But, the most successful way to acquire is still the best—owning a store. Many Americans are firmly indoctrinated into the belief that comic books mean instant cash. They go about the business of finding these dividends and then turning them for quick money. Frequently, they get slapped with a lesson in economics. There is no money if there is no one to sell them to!

Ebay, conventions and swap meets are rarely the answer for the uninitiated. Too many people overestimate the logistics of unloading large piles of common comic books for real profit. So, they go to

comic book stores.

We average two to three calls a day from people trying to sell comic books. Most of the material is of little interest, '80s and '90s comics. We often find ourselves literally turning back tides of books offered to us. In fact, we've had owners accept the reality of our rejection and just leave their boxes of comic books at our store and then drive away. And we still don't want them! Free, or not, tons of comics become a burden I have to pay my employees to work with when I could be paying them to do something more profitable.

Well, recently all that changed. We were fortunate enough to have collectors show up at our store simultaneously with really wonderful stuff (thanks Dale and Paul!). Stuff like a run of Golden Age *Superman* back to issue #2 and tons of Bronze Age comics. Popping into our store like bolts out of the blue was of great surprise. Both owners stated their reasons for selling to a store. Both are fully aware of selling venues direct to the public. Both were wary of time constraints attached to selling large or exotic collections. Both are uncertain of the buyer's satisfaction being met. Both preferred the cash fast and up front. Both accepted the lower price we offered as wholesale buyers. Both were gentlemen. Thanks to owners like these two men, they have reinforced the reasoning behind maintaining a comic book-only store.

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We have had a busy last few months. As usual we had a flurry of orders before the release of the new *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. This was immediately then followed by another bunch of customers due to the release of the new *Guide*. I feel the *Guide* is more accurate

now that the top listed price is for 9.2 copies. Yes, many fans are upset that the longstanding tradition has changed and still want to see 9.4 listings. But those who follow the market know that true strict graded 9.4s on anything worthwhile pre-1980 rarely sell anywhere near the previous *Guide* prices. In many cases the new 9.2 price reflects what strict 9.0 copies sell for.

One correction to my previous report. The Whitman that surely does not exist is *Porky Pig* #99 (and not *Winnie the Pooh* #22 as stated in error). There are now at least five known copies of every 8-12/1980 Whitman still listed in the *Guide*, with the exception of *Porky Pig* #99. Thus it should soon be joining the ranks of *Buck Rogers* #10, *Popeye* #160/161 and *Woody Woodpecker* #192, as comics that were never printed and need to be deleted from the *Guide*. The most elusive Whitman issues remain to be *Super Goof* #61, *Little Lulu* #260 and *Winnie the Pooh* #22.

In the *Guide* #34 on page 951, the Bronze Age Era has now officially been established as 1970-1984/85 (beginning with *Green Lantern* #76 and ending in 1984/1985 where Crisis and Secret Wars begin. Thus all comics from the 1980-1985 are now "official" Bronze Age comics. The late era Bronze from 1980-1984/85 are now 20-25 years old and generally very low priced in the *Guide*. We have had a lot of demand for these comics in the last six months or so. Most dealer stocks are starting to get depleted on these issues, without them even noticing, but especially in strict high grade VF/NM and better copies. These will not remain a bargain forever and now is the time to get them, while still very affordable.

Green Lantern #76 has been a hot book for over a year now, but if it becomes seen as the pivotal book to begin the Bronze Age, it might soon head to the stratosphere in price. Neal Adams has been quite hot again in the last six month too. Last year his comics were lukewarm sellers.

Other Adams books to watch are the already hot *Detective* #369 and #400. I

expect that by early 2005 that all Neal Adams comics from the 1967-1975 era to be well on the upswing in both demand and price. All comics with Berni Wrightson art from this same era are also well up in demand. The demand is not limited to their major works. Many fans already have those, and are now moving onto splash page & cover art in the previously overlooked titles. Thus the Adams *Tomahawks* & DC horror issues with even a single page of either artist are drying up fast. Many are hard to find in even VF, much less strict NM. Neal Adams, Jack Kirby, Barry Windsor-Smith, Frank Miller, Byrne, Perez & Berni Wrightson are arguably the most important Bronze Age artists. Many of their comics currently carry only small premiums, if any at all. This should change in the next few years, as more fans take notice.

All horror comics from 1968-1985, but especially the DC and Charlton titles have been in very high demand in the last few months. These have been selling well for the last two years, but demand has almost doubled, because suddenly we have a lot of buyers looking for strict VF or better, but especially VF/NM or better copies. The current market supply is low, even on 1977-1985 era horror comics in strict 9.0 or better. As prices begin to climb, perhaps more will eventually come onto the market. This demand is certainly not limited to the above publishers, as all horror titles from these publishers show very strong demand also: Skywald mags, Warren, Marvel, Red Circle, Atlas/Seaboard. Even the Gold Key titles like *Boris Karloff*, *Ripley's* and *Twilight Zone* are showing new life. Some of the most extremely undervalued issues are *Weird War* #64, 68 (Frank Miller's first DC work) and *Twilight Zone* #84 and 85 (Miller's first pro work). These are a bargain at double *Guide*.

The Marvel horror mags are up in demand too. As of this writing, there are very few 9.4 or better CGC copies, if any at all, of most issues of; *Dracula Lives*, *Haunt of Horror*, *Monsters Unleashed*, *Tales of the Zombie* and *Vampire Tales*. If

this shortage continues, we should see escalating prices. Surely if any mags are worth CGC grading, these are among the top candidates. Perhaps collectors judge it too early on to grade and sell off their highest graded copies. But thinking back, I cannot recall too many of these mags ever being around in the strict 9.4 range.

All Charlton horror titles 1950s thru 1980s are selling in all grades. But most notable is the increase in demand for the 1971-1984 era issues, especially those with art by Ditko, Sutton, Howard, Zeck and Don Newton. These are comics to watch, as the supply keeps diminishing.

I managed to buy up a few collections of DC romance comics from the late 1950s thru to the 1970s. Thus I had the largest selection I have had in quite a while. I listed them all on my website and the sales suddenly started rolling in. Most buyers were just filling in holes in their collections, and not too concerned about condition. This worked out well, as over 90% of my love comic inventory is in the GD thru FN range or about VG average. In these grades, they remain very affordable and still undervalued. Those issues with good artists (Adams, Toth, Cardy, etc), or the Giant issues, are in much bigger demand, as they are viewed as Key issues.

Adventure Comics #479-490 are up in demand, since the release of the new Dial H for Hero series. Look for some forgotten George Perez covers on #484-486 and 490. The hidden gem in the pack is #479 (3/1981; first Return of Dial H for Hero cover/story, and with a story written by Harlan Ellison, with first app Silver Fox). The concept of the *Adventure* issues was unique, with perhaps hundreds of new heroes and villains, most created by the readers of that era, almost none ever to be seen again.

I have sold an unusual amount of 1970s Underground Comix, in the last few months. As usual, anything with Robert Crumb art leads the pack. The main difference is the requests for obscure issues. We have had buyers who

scan all the listing on our website, and they have found some unusual titles waiting in our underground category. This trend also has led buyers to dig through our huge listing of alternative comics from the 1970s-1990s. There are endless titles not listed in the *Guide* that remain totally unknown to the average comics fan. Some are truly horrible, which makes them interesting in their own right. There was a lot of experimentation and early work by many creators hidden in these books. The trend for unusual comics continues, with yet more buyers looking for forgotten old giveaway comics. All these obscure comics are a fun and affordable collecting theme.

The latest giveaway to set a new eBay record at \$87 was *Future Generations-The National Parks of Canada* (1969; Queen's Printer for Canada; with young Jean Chretien as minister of Indian Affairs, over two decades before he became Prime Minister of Canada). Canada's most famous comic is most certainly *Captain Canuck*. This will be a very good year for his fans. The release of the new three-part mini series "West Coast" Captain Canuck in "Unholy War" is imminent and anticipated. It will introduce a new character in a new Captain's costume, by a new creative team from Manitoba.

In February 2004 we saw the release of *The New Original Captain Canuck Limited Edition* #1-A and #1-B (each limited to only 30 signed and serially numbered Ashcan copies; A and B feature two different endings in the story). They featured the return of Thomas Evans, the original Captain Canuck with Redcoat, Kebec, Bluefox, etc (story by Mark Shainblum, art by Sandy Carruthers; Shainblum is the award winning writer of Northguard and Angloman; Carruthers is the illustrator of the *Men In Black*, which became the Academy Award winning movie). But even more interesting is *Captain Canuck* #15 (due to be released Summer 2004). This finally contains the legendary complete *unpublished* issue #15, originally due to be published back in

1981, with art by Freeman and St. Aubin, story by Comely. It will be a limited edition of 150 signed and serially numbered copies: The original series #1-14 and Special #1 ran from 1975-1981 and remain rather plentiful, and certainly affordable. Captain Canuck is nearly 30 years old and is now nostalgic for many Canadian fans. These new limited editions, along with the first printing of the original #4 (2/1977) should make good long term investments. We have stocked up on all of these, plus many related scarcer items and have found increased demand for them.

The kid's magazine *Dynamite* (Scholastic Mags pub) has long had a following. Many grew up on this title and now want to recapture that part of their youth. There has been no concerted effort to document these mags, thus I have done most of the work on my website. I have now had many buyers anxiously buying up the key issues they remember. Most buyers are looking for covers and contents of characters they collect. The Vampire "Count Morbida" character featured two-page comic strips with puzzles and games mixed into the comics in most issues. The *Dawnstar* and *Nightglider*, the *Dynamic Duo* superheroes comic strip appears in most issues #28 thru #99. Many early issues contained two-page Marvel and DC super-hero color comic strips along with a third quiz page of the same characters (includes: Spider-Man, FF, Hulk, Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, etc). They are simply loaded with covers and articles of virtually all the TV, movie, music and comic characters that were of interest to kids and teens of the 1974-1991 era. The average issue sells in the \$6-\$12 price range. Many come with bonus items (posters, stickers, cards, etc), that are often missing. Those that are complete with all the bonuses bring 150-300% of that price.

Naturally the more popular covers are in higher demand and bring premiums; (for example: #6=Snoopy, #8=Six Million Dollar Man, #13=Sid and Marty Kroft TV's Land of the Lost, #17=Bruce Lee, #25=Space: 1999, #27=Bionic

Woman, #32=Fonz, #40=Farrah Fawcett, #52=Lou Ferrigno as Hulk, #54=Battlestar Galactica, #66=Dukes of Hazard, #75=Brady Bunch cast, #98=E.T. & more). With comic fans, the most requested issues are those with Neal Adams Continuity Studios art and posters (#16, 46); Also of note are the Jane Stine story issues with Joe Kubert studio school of art, and the Joe Kubert's corner articles with art and how to draw. Issue 3 is in big demand for the Hulk article and poster (but most copies lack the scarce poster). Issues 1-10 are rare, with #11-30 being scarce. Issues 101-162 had much lower print runs and are all uncommon to scarce; #101-162 would be a very difficult run to complete in any condition, much less higher grade.

Other similar kids magazines of note include: *Bananas*, *Crackers*, *Hot Dog*, and *Weird Worlds*. The Sesame Street mag has its collectors too. And of special note is: *Electric Company Magazine* (most issues include Spider-Man in a new "Spidey Super Stories" color comic strip tale).

For the last six months all Conan and Robert E. Howard comics have had much increased demand. In largest demand are: *Conan* #25-100, 250-275; *Kull* #1-5; *Kull and the Barbarians* #1-3; *Savage Sword of Conan* #1-30, 200-235; *Conan Saga* #80-97; *Conan the King* #50-55; most *Red Sonja* and the 1994-1998 revival titles. Although there are the High Grade investor/collectors, these are not the main buyers. Those who seek them out are mainly those fans trying to complete their sets. Many never got to the earlier issues, just as many quit and never finished their sets, most did not wander into the related titles. As with many other titles (*GI Joe*, *Transformers*, *Star Wars*, etc), by around 1990 interest was at an all time low, thus causing low print runs and eventual cancellation. *Savage Sword* #200-235 are very difficult to keep in stock, especially the high demand #231-234 (at \$12 each in VF) and #235 (at \$20 in VF). As this shortage gets more severe, we expect *Guide* prices will eventually catch up to the market.

We get endless of requests for these impossible to keep in stock items: *Eerie* #1, 17; *Blazing Combat* #1; *Pussycat* #1; *Archie's Girls Betty & Veronica* #320; *Cerebus* #1; *Teenage Mutant Ninja* #1(1st); *Rudolph* #NN (Treasury C-20 implied); *Young Love* #69; *Dennis the Menace Bible Kids* #7-10; *G.I. Joe* #155; *G.I. Combat* #68; *Our Army at War* #83; *Gothic Tales of Love* #1-3 (yes, #3 exists); *Little Lulu* #260; *Albedo* #2; *Gobbledygook* (1984) #1, 2; *Creepy* #146; *Vicki* #3, 4; *DC 100 Page Super Spectacular* #5; *Super DC Giant* #S-17, S-21; *Our Love Story* #5; *Twilight Zone* #84; and other similar items. These remain some of the most undervalued items in the *Guide*. These items almost all sell for well over *Guide* on eBay in any grade and in unslabbed Non-CGC copies. The *Guide* always seems to lag on these obscure titles, as they are non superhero. Many buyers tell me that they call, write and email almost every dealer listed, yet are not able to locate these items. If these items are on your list, you should expect to pay 150-400% of current *Guide*, if you can find them at all. Although there are those that want high grade copies, most are satisfied with any grade on these.

Golden Age Sales: *Alley Oop* #12 VG/F \$36; *Amazing Adventures* #11 VG/F \$30; *Authentic Police Cases* #3 VG \$60; *Batman* #94 VG \$110; *Congo Bill* #5 FN- \$175; *Tarzan's Jungle World* #25 FN+ \$38; *Tom Terrific* #2 VG+ \$35; *Vault of Horror* #19 VG \$80.

Silver Age Sales: *Amazing Spider-Man* #23 VG/F \$97, #38 VF \$138; *Conan* #6 NM \$65; *Daredevil* #88 NM \$18; *Fantastic Four* #76 VF- \$37; *Incredible Hulk* #110 VF \$40; *Justice League of America* #42 VF/NM \$71; *Psycho* #1 VF \$50; *Scream* #5 VF/NM \$25, #6 VF/NM \$30, #9 VF/NM \$30; *X-Men* #24 NM \$175.

Bronze Age Sales: *Amazing Spider-Man* #141 VF \$20, #146 NM \$35; *Defenders* #15 NM \$21; *Fantastic Four* #148 NM \$20, #149 NM \$20; *Iron Man* #55 VF \$70; *Wolverine* #1 NM \$55, #2 NM \$48, #3 NM \$38.

Modern Age Sales: *Caliber Presents*

(first Crow) #1 NM \$35; *Incredible Hulk* #340 NM \$40.

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We set up at two big comic conventions during the month of May. The first was the long running and much venerated Motor City Comic Convention. Located at the Novi in Michigan, and run with considerable finesse by promoter Michael Goldman (owner of Motor City Comics). The convention ran May 14-16 without a glitch. True to form, the crowd was large, sales were brisk and the buying was even better. We managed to pick up a couple hundred scarce to rare assorted Golden Age and Atomic Age books, among them a near complete run of *Spy Smasher* and a complete run of *Scoop Comics*. Kudos to Michael and his crew for a job well done.

The second show we set up at was the relatively new Wizard World Philadelphia Comic Convention. This show ran May 21-23 at the Philadelphia Convention Center and should put to rest anyone's doom and gloom predictions about the comic market. This crowd was huge and so were the sales. The buying, while not as deep as at Motor City, was nonetheless excellent. We bought a medium size '50s collection containing some obscure gems such as *Picture Parade* #1 (the Atomic Bomb and dog in the desert cover), *Howdy Doody* #1 and *Seven Seas* #4. This show just keeps getting better and better and the sky's the limit as far as I'm concerned. Some sales of note at these two shows were as follows:

Golden Age: *Scoop* #2 ct 2.0 \$250; *Frankenstein* #24 6.0 \$200; *Funny Picture Stories* V2 #5 6.5 \$275; *Gift* #4 ct 2.5 \$225; *Spy Smasher* #9 3.0 \$275; *National* #18 (Pearl Harbor issue) t 2.0

\$150; *Amazing Man* #14 3.0 \$175; *Funny Pages* #37 6.5 \$420; *Zip* #15 5.0 \$500.

Atomic Age: *Picture Parade* #1 teacher's edition 4.5 \$150; *Casper* #3 2.5 \$90; *Sensation* #109 3.0 \$125.

Silver Age:; *Amazing Spider-Man* #5 4.0 \$400; *Tales of Suspense* #50 CGC 8.5 \$450; *X-Men* #1 nc 0.5 \$200, #94 6.0 \$200.

Dale Moore, President

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Magazines: Still eking out low to high grade copies of the usual suspects: *Planet of the Apes* (though slowing), *Vampirella*, *Savage Sword*, *Savage Tales*, *Mad*, *Eerie*, *Creepy*, *Marvel Super-Action*, *Marvel Preview*, and *Deadly Hands of Kung-Fu*. *DHOKF*, especially #28 (Bruce Lee Life Story) and *Special Album Edition* #1 (1974) are the most requested and hardest to find in High Grade. We anticipate a veritable hot bed of activity as dealer overstock and warehouse finds continue to leak into the market as the summer progresses.

Silver Age: We wanted to report some lower spectrum sales, though higher end issues continue to thrive, despite heavy competition from esteemed auction houses. Ebay sellers are also raising the bar, as better descriptions, bigger photos, and down to earth shipping and handling fees are becoming more evident.

Sales: *Action Comics* #279 GD \$5.50; *Amazing Spider-Man* #15 GD \$31, #17 FR \$20.77, #18 GD \$34; *Tales of Suspense* #37 GD \$34, #38 GD \$20; *Tales to Astonish* #8 GD+ \$41.

CGC-Graded Sales: *Tales to Astonish* #30 5.0 \$42, #25 5.5 \$56; *Tales of Suspense* #23 4.5 \$40; *Strange Tales* #78 5.0 \$50, #82 4.0 \$40, #90 5.0 \$41; *Journey Into Mystery* #73 (Spider-Man prototype) 4.5 \$70.

At the lower end, CGC prices are seeing the gap narrow between slabbed

and unslabbed. Additionally, a most trusted source states "CGC is way too long of a wait and it appears CGG is pulling around the same amount of coin off eBay." So deepens the controversy over encapsulation. Other non graded Silver Age movers are: *Captain Marvel*, *Captain America*, *Incredible Hulk*, *Adventure Comics*, *Batman*, and *Detective Comics*. Jake Gyllenhall ("The Day After Tomorrow") has been cast as the man of steel, and this has pulled up only the Silver Age issues of *Superman* and *Action Comics*.

Bronze Age: Ghost Rider appearances continue to do well. Even *Avengers* #214 is selling! *Marvel Spotlight* #5-11, *Ghost Rider* #1-10, 20, and 75-81 are all fast movers in any complete grade. Other notable Bronze are *Black Panther*, *Jungle Action* #5 up, *Black Goliath*, *Battlestar Galactica* (High Grade), *Conan the Barbarian* 1-24 (especially #10 giant size and # 14 Elric part one); *Conan* #1 GD \$36, #10 VG \$9, #14 FN \$20; *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 selling, though slowing down a little, as many copies are offered on eBay (some quite attractive!), #129 VG \$100, #129 VG+ \$153; *Marvel Tales* #67 (30 cent variant) G/VG \$10.50. Note that *Chilling Adventures in Sorcery* #1 and 2 cooling off, with all their heat going to *Sabrina* # 1.

Modern Age: The Gemstone Walt Disney issues are a favorite of both the kids and adults. Back issues selling for a little over cover when we have them (we try to give them out for free but some sponsors instruct us to sell some to cover expenses (like shipping and procuring new collections). These are really a treat!

With Christian "American Psycho" Bale set to play the lead in *Batman: Beginnings*, it is no surprise that Frank Miller's year one storyline in *Batman* #s 404-408 are hot, but it is Halle Berry's role as Catwoman that has surprised many fans, but that enthusiasm has not carried over into the back issue market. *Catwoman Ltd.* series and regular monthly sell for cover price, regardless of how delectable Ms. Berry might be on film (me-WOW).

Alias issues are hot, and with the announcement that Powers is in film production, another Brian Michael Bendis megalith is about to be unleashed to the world. Very hard to find *Powers* #1-10 and always at record prices.

Adult comics (sponsors agree we can't give them to kids, so we sell them to adults only over 18++) sell well, though many buyers get confused by our name (no kids ever see these comics, not even our volunteers)! Fast Movers are: *Fast first prints*, anything *Cry for Dawn* or Joseph Michael Linsner, *Satanika*, *Cherry Poptart*, *Adult Starlet Series*, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *From Dusk 'Till Dawn*, *Cavewoman*, and later *Grendel* issues 35-40. Also Dave Stevens covers, notably *Crossfire* #12, *DNAgents* #24, *Grendel* #4, *True Love* #1, and *Jungle Comics* #1.

One of our personal favorite modern comics is *Bite Club*, by Howard Chaykin and David Tischman (with to-die-for covers by Frank Quitely). This book about mobster vampires makes *The Sopranos* and *100 Bullets* look like *Golden Girls* and *Spidey Super-Stories*. You can bleed and look good, easy reader!

Chaykin is at his "Black Kiss" best, with, ahem, strong flowing graphic narrative by Tischman. Our other personal favorite is *Supreme Power*, with #10 being the best googly issue we've seen in recent memory. We look forward to each issue with baited breath! *Man, these are cool books!*

Golden Age Sales: *Best Western* #5 (A-1 #66) GD \$12, GD \$15; *Special Edition Comics* #1 FR \$330; *Vault of Horror* #37 CGC 5.5 \$80; *Richie Rich* #2 CGC 4.5 \$155, #3 CGC 6.5 \$360.

Other issues including incomplete and coverless getting few and far between, with many dealers toting to conventions to find hungry collectors, like a feeding frenzy, chum to sharks.

So there, in conclusion, is another sunny month of sales! We are looking forward to collaborating with Dynamic Forces shortly, we'll keep you posted in SCOOP and in these hallowed pages. Hope you had a great Free Comic Book

Day, and remember, at Comics4Kids, it's every day!

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I believe the back issue comic book market to be in long term trouble. The vast majority of current interest is sparked by investment potential and driven by sadly misguided "advisors" who care much more about making a buck than they do about the hobby in general. The silly slabbing continues and investors/speculators/fools continue to pay ridiculous prices that will ensure that they never see a profit. Even Overstreet (who sold out years ago) saw fit to base many of the higher prices in the 2004 *Comic Book Price Guide* on auction results for these encased books.

Dropping the highest grade to NM- (9.2) was silly. Bad move for the hobby as a whole. I can only hope that this laughable phase will pass, the so called investor/speculators (please don't call yourselves collectors, you don't even read the books or enjoy the artwork) will take it on the chin and then move on to the next level of stupidity. That will once again leave comic books to those who enjoy the stories, savor the art, have fun checking out the ads and enjoy a lifetime of completing favorite runs. I am concerned that the silly price levels on many books in the new *Guide* (have you seen the Disney's, Dell photo cover books, Archies? Please!) will discourage many collectors and lead to fewer across the board sales.

To all of you dealers who have sold out to the new craze in order to make extra money—well you have certainly proved that your pocketbook is more important than the health of the comic book collecting hobby. No gimmick or hype can ever take away the pure enjoyment I receive from re-reading my vintage books. I have complete runs of

most DC, Timely, Marvel, Dell and Archie right back to the late 1930s. I feel sorry for the collector who has yet to purchase these books and the sad state that he is facing today. Hopefully the future will bring some semblance of a more responsible marketplace.

It is early summer in Central Florida. Hot, humid and lots of rain! Sales have been steady if not spectacular. Silver Age Marvel and DC still lead the way. The lower grade books sell well while the more expensive high grade copies have a problem finding a home due to higher cost—most collectors simply cannot afford books in the \$1000 and up range. As usual we have had to discount certain titles and groups of comics. As I have stated in the past the overall price structure still needs to lower in order to improve across the board sales.

Silver Age 1955-1969. Marvels in the good to fine range moved well this month. *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four*, *Journey into Mystery* and *Tales of Suspense* sold well. We were also able to purchase a 1960s DC collection that included many super hero books from late 1962 to 1969—a mid grade group that will help to fill out our DC selection. DC books sell in spurts. One week *Batman* will move, the next week it will be another title. Overall DC sales are decent but a bit behind Marvel this month. Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey and other similar brands are slow as usual.

Sales: *Tales of Suspense* #41 VG \$200; *Amazing Spider-Man* #9 GD \$95; *Fantastic Four* #5 GD \$395; *Batman* #167 VG \$20; *Strange Tales* #101 VG \$140; *Detective* #327 VF \$75.

Golden Age 1935-1955. Kind of quiet this month. We picked up a run of early *World's Finest* but that was about it. Most collectors cannot afford the better Golden Age comics. Demand was light this month. I am seeing more and more restored books from this period. We really need to address this issue with a price listing and general information in the next *Guide*. Not all books would be listed—let's start with key popular issues and go from there. The time has come.

Sales: *Batman* #4 GD \$350; *Marvel*

Mystery #60 VG \$325; *Superman* #62 GD \$95; *Action* #11 FN \$1800; *Archie* #18 GD \$35; *Four Color* #178 FR \$50.

Art, Toys & Disneyana. We bought a large vintage Disney collection this month. Lots of early Disneyland items and 1940s-1950s cartoon and movie pieces. These items have always had a good sales record for us—we should do well with this group. Demand continues for 1960s TV and comic character toys. We do not see as much of this material as we could use. We did get in the 1966 Aurora Batman model kit. I also get requests for original art but have had

Inspiration Central: Jim Starlin [continued from page 16]

to it that I found very attractive. I was very drawn to it.

CBM: Are there any contemporary comic creators whose work you find interesting?

Starlin: As far as writers, I try to pick up everything that Peter David and Alan Moore write. And there's a number of different cartoonists who I find [interesting.] They don't draw like me or anything.

I very much like Bryan Hitch, who pencils *The Ultimates*, and also the guy who does Spider-Man [in *Peter Parker*], Humberto Ramos. The penciler who's doing *Fantastic Four*, [Mike] Wieringo, I like his stuff. A few others here and there, but those are the ones who come to mind.

Naiman Report [continued from page 68]

slabbed copies of *Vault of Horror* #18 9.2 \$1130, #19 9.2 \$1130, #29 VF \$375; and *Tales from the Crypt* #36 VF/NM \$640.

Notables: Thanks to Bill Alexander for the latest magazine update—Marvel's 1975 B&W mag *Gothic Tales of Love* #3 has surfaced and collectors might also note that *GTOL* #1, #2 and #3 can be found with either a 60- or 75-cent cover price logo on the front cover. The 60-cent editions are the Variant editions. As this was going to press, there was an eBay auction of a FN copy that had already exceeded *10X Guide*!

One of the biggest problems when attending the Comic-Con is self-control. That urge to vacuum up everything in sight—it can be an overpowering mania that grabs hold of an otherwise sane individual. Luckily this craziness is limited by one's checkbook and credit card limit. But why do we do it? Some people collect for investment. Some collect for pleasure. Some folks do it to learn about history. And

little offered to me in recent months. We are ripe for a quality vintage collection.

Sales: Spider-Man Aurora kit in box \$350; Disneyland 1959 Guidebook \$20; *Flinstones* cel \$50; Capt Action doll loose \$95

That will wrap up our month. We look forward to seeing everyone in San Diego!

Opinions expressed in CBM "Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

And I guess you can see from the diversity of their styles, I'm kind of eclectic at what I like looking at.

CBM: Is there something about their particular styles that you like, or perhaps their approaches to storytelling?

Starlin: Well, Bryan's stuff is so photorealistic without being photorealistic at the same time. He's got such a great sense of lighting. Ramos? Well, he's just berserk, you know? [Laughter] The things he does with proportions are just a hoot to look at. 'Ringo, on the other hand, is very similar in some ways, but he's got a real reader-friendly feel to it. You want to see what's going on with the story with that art work.

So they all give a little something here, and I appreciate the input. 🐼

some people "save things" because it helps them to fill a gaping hole, calm fears, erase insecurity. For them, collecting provides order in their lives and a bulwark against the chaos and terror of an uncertain world. It serves as a protectant against the destruction of everything they've ever loved. Things make some people feel safe. Though the world outside is a dangerous and continually changing place there are many comicbook folk who like to sit safely in their abode at night, "putting together their things" and reveling in the false security of their collection.

The SD show can be so much more enjoyable if you take a breath, mingle and talk with your friends and don't get caught up in the frenzy of beating out someone else for that "must-have" issue of *Whatever-Man*. This is supposed to be an enjoyable time—don't miss out on the fun. Because it is FUN! 🐼

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#50	Julius Schwartz, Captain Comet	\$10
#65	Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane	\$8
#66	Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven!	\$8
#72	Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I	\$8
#73	Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II	\$8
#76	Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton	\$8
#79	Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Captain Action	\$8
#83	Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man	\$8
#84	Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Brainiac	\$8
#85	Eisner, Manning, Whitman Mystery Part I	\$8
#86	Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II	\$8
#87	George Evans, Detectives Inc.	\$8
#88	Murphy Anderson, Rudolph	\$8
#89	Hal Foster, Frank Cho, George Perez Part II	\$8
#90	Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, George Perez Part III	\$8
#91	Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler	\$8
#92	Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth	\$8
#93	Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone	\$8
#94	GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up	\$8
#95	Disney strip art, Miracleman	\$8
#96	Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel	\$8
Sp #5	Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8	\$12
#97	Curt Swan, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents	\$8
#98	Western: Dick Ayers, Graham Ingels, John Severin	\$8
#99	Marvel 1965, Iron Man, Hulk, Transformers	\$8
#100	Charles Schulz, H. J. Ward, Pulp Roots of Batman	\$8
#101	Archie, Butch Guice, CrossGen	\$8
#102	Lev Gleason, Russ Heath, Commercial Comics Co.	\$8
#103	Disney Comics, Jack Bradbury, Don Rosa	\$8
#104	Batman, Neal Adams, Loeb & Lee, Lew Schwartz	\$9
#105	Wrightson, Kaluta, Jeffrey Jones, Bruce Jones	\$9
#106	Good Girl Art, Rima, Cat Girl, John Celardo	\$9
#107	Victor Fox, Aquaman's Paul Norris	\$9
#108	End of DC's SA, Geo. Carlson, GA Black Market	\$9
#109	GA Villains, Neal Adams Pt. 2, Infantino	\$9
#110	Ross, Saunders, Kirby, Wildey, Snyder III	\$9
#111	SA Villains, Paul Gulacy, Jim Starlin	\$9
#112	Atlas Horror, Alan Class Comics	\$9

Prices include postage.
Add \$2 each for orders outside U.S.
MD (5%) & MO (6.975%) add sales tax.
MasterCard, VISA orders call 800 322 7978.

CBM BACK ISSUES
GEMSTONE PUBLISHING
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by Michelle Nolan

The start of memories!

From the standpoint purely of commercial success, 1959 was surely the least profitable year for comic books since their circulation first began to explode two decades earlier.

It was, however, still a wonderful year for comics.

What else can you say about a year in which the Flash received his own comic book, Green Lantern was brought back in a Silver Age version, Supergirl debuted, Sgt. Rock began his memorable run, Adam Strange began to appear regularly, and the first Hanna-Barbara comic books were published.

Today, of course, publishers would kill for the half-million or quarter-million circulation that many comic books still could claim in 1959. In that wonderful year, though, the field was considered depressed.

Only 1,511 issues of newsstand comic books were published with 1959 dates—give or take a few reprint types that may not exist. In only seven years—years during which television grew from novelty to mainstream—the total number of issues published fell by more than half and total circulation probably dropped by well over 50 percent.

There were, however, still plenty of neighborhood or newsstand outlets for comic books. Not as many as once existed, to be sure, but still far more than would exist a decade later near the end of the Silver Age. And with newsstands so much less crowded in 1959—almost all the large pulp fiction magazines were long gone, too—good, new comic books received plenty of exposure.

In a sense, even though the comic book industry had shrunk so badly by 1959, it gave DC's innovations the exposure they needed to grow. And grow they did, setting in motion the impetus for Marvel's move into the Silver Age as well as DC's prosperity.

I've always maintained that the

Comics Code Authority was the best thing that ever happened to the major publishers in the mid-1950s. (Remember, it wasn't the Comics Code that nearly killed Atlas/Marvel in 1957, but a drastic implosion caused by distributor failure.) A look at the field in 1959 confirms that for the first time since the infancy of the comic book, three companies produced more than two-thirds of all newsstand comics: DC (382), Dell (366) and Charlton (289).

For all intents and purposes, humor-heavy Harvey (153) and Archie (100) were the only other significant publishers along with Marvel (96), which in those days was limited to 16 monthly issues, notable primarily for Jack Kirby's monsters. Nobody else produced more than the 40 issues from the quirky American Comics Group, which was down to four titles by 1959.

Four of my most treasured memories as an 11-year-old comic collector were the publication of *The Flash* #105, *Action* #252, *Mystery in Space* #53 and *Showcase* #22.

I've always felt *The Flash* #105 was one of the most important comic books of all time. I'll never forget spotting that issue the day it came out—January 5, 1959. I scribbled the date on the top of my issue along with the notation, "First new issue of *The Flash*

in 10 years!"

That wasn't quite correct. The former title, of course, was the anthology title *Flash Comics*, which was cancelled with #104 (Feb 1949). DC made comic book history of a sort by continuing the numbering 10 years later, something never before done. I believe Atlas had held the record by resuming the numbering of *Captain America*, *Sub-Mariner* and *Human Torch* in 1954 for



their brief revival after a five-year layoff. I had been collecting comics since 1956 and purchased *The Flash*'s four *Showcase* tryout issues, so I knew that #105 was a genuine first issue.



I can remember friends being thoroughly confused by that numbering, wondering how they could have missed any previous issues of such a long-running title! I patiently explained, in my best know-it-all, 11-year-old tone, how DC decided to pay homage to Flash Comics and made the title seem established along the way. In those days, that was a plus. DC often left "No.1" off its first issues up to that point.

I remember seeing the house ads for *The Flash* #105, but I can't remember whether I saw any of them before the comic actually came out. In those days, before fandom as we know it began, most readers had no other way of knowing about a new comic's appearance.

On the other hand, I do remember how stunned I was to see *Showcase* #22 on the stands with the first appearance of the Silver Age Green Lantern. I couldn't believe it, since I loved the handful of the original Green Lantern's appearances I had seen up to that point. In fact, the original Green Lantern was tied with Flash Gordon and Wonder Woman as my favorite character (and still is). The new Green Lantern quickly became a favorite, too. I loved the concept of using will

power to operate the magic ring.

That is still one of my favorite childhood memories—seeing *Showcase* #22 on the stands. Yes, 1959 was a wonderful year.

Likewise, I was thrilled to see Adam Strange's debut in *Mystery in Space* #53 after his three *Showcase* tryout issues. *Mystery in Space* was already one of my favorite comics, and Adam Strange was a big bonus. I still feel that DC's presentation of Adam Strange under Julius Schwartz's editorship is second only to Alex Raymond's Flash Gordon in the long history of science fiction heroes, but I'm sure nostalgia colors my views.

So, too, was Supergirl truly special, even though the character began strictly as a gently used backup during her first couple of years in

Action Comics, in contrast to the full-fledged treatment accorded The Flash, Green Lantern and Adam Strange. I never could figure out why it took 13 years for Supergirl to get her own title, and then the first series lasted only 10 issues.

I've always regretted that I somehow missed the debut of the true Sgt. Rock in *Our Army at War* #83 and his ensuing early appearances. I didn't especially care for war comics. Though I purchased them occasionally—I loved the DC war-dinosaur issues of the early 1960s—I

guess I wasn't sophisticated enough to appreciate them. I'm literally paying the price now, having slowly collected back issues in affordable condition over the past two decades.

For years, collectors have claimed *Wonder Woman* #105 (Apr 1959) is scarcer than other issues from that period. I'm not sure just how scarce it is—I didn't have any trouble getting a back issue about 25 years ago—but I don't recall seeing it on the stands. For some reason, though, *Wonder Woman* did not seem to appear at my comic outlets as regularly as most other DC titles, so I did miss an occasional issue. I remember I spent many years hunting down a copy of *Wonder Woman* #111 (Jan 1960) because I never saw it originally. At any rate, *Wonder Woman* #105, featuring the secret origin of Wonder Woman, was yet another reason 1959 was a wonderful year.

Other than *Showcase* #22, though, the comic book that most startled me in 1959 came from Simon and Kirby and the Archie Series, not from DC. It was the awkwardly titled *The Double Life of Private Strong*, and featured Lancelot Strong (great name!) as The Shield, the first patriotic hero I had ever seen other than Wonder Woman.

I had no idea that The Shield was a Silver



Age version of the Golden Age hero of the same name. MLJ's original character disappeared after *Pep Comics* #65 (Jan [continued on page 80])

Book Review

by Paul Gravett



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WORDS OF WONDER:

The Life and Times of Otto Binder

by Bill Schelly

(Hamster Press, 2003)

www.billschelly.com

\$18.95 ISBN 0-9645668-9-0

How time flies. It's nearly forty years now since as a kid I started consciously collecting comics, not just acquiring and consuming them by chance but eagerly seeking them out and treasuring them. Quite apart from the stories themselves, one of the main things that quickly came to fascinate me was discovering more about the extraordinary diversity of this medium and of the people who create them.

These days I feel spoilt for choice, because hardly a week goes by without my hearing about some new history, study or monograph on the subject. I am convinced that right now we are living in a genuine Golden Age of so-called comics para-literature, of books and magazines analyzing and celebrating comics and their characters and creators. Where better than in this magazine devoted to appreciating comics past and present for me to alert you to some of the finest recent reference books to add to your library, books which can take you back to the comics we love with enhanced understanding or open your eyes to wonders you may have missed.

For most of us, comics are, at least initially, a visual experience, so not surprisingly you can find plenty of first-rate art books on some of the dazzling delineators and complete writer/artists of

newspaper strips, comics and graphic novels. There are, however, far fewer books purely about the wordsmiths, the unsung storytellers from before today's big-name writers, before the recent years of full credits, before Stan Lee and the Marvel Age, back to a time when many writers of comics went uncredited and often remain unknown to this day.

As someone who has documented much of the history of American fandom, Bill Schelly is the perfect researcher to investigate the life and legacy of comic book scripter Otto Binder (1911-1974).

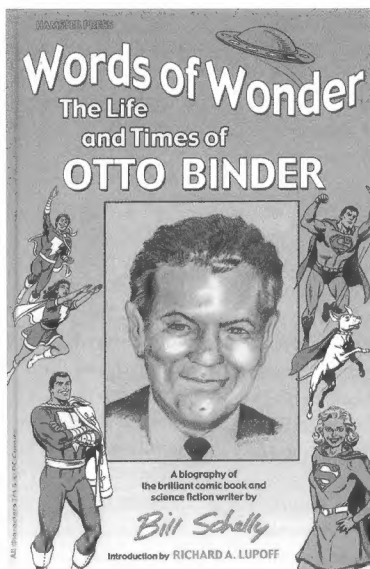
Although they never met, without knowing it, young Billy's first entrancing comic book, the glorious 80-page giant *Superman Annual* #1, had converted him into a lifelong admirer of Binder, who scripted most of the classics reprinted in that 1960 issue. It is also fitting that a fan like Bill should write and publish this biography, because it was largely thanks to comics fandom that Otto

Binder came to realize in his later years how much his vast, mostly anonymous output of 2,227 comic book stories had deeply touched so many young people and stayed with them into their adult lives.

Any biographer of someone no longer alive dreams of finding an intimate unpublished autobiography. As luck would have it, Otto had written his own autobiography in 1948, when he was approaching forty, and Schelly gained access to this unpublished manuscript. While useful, it was more a light-hearted commentary of a variety of topics than a meticulous account of his inner life. Otto gave it the self-effacing title "Memoirs of a Nobody." Thankfully this 'Nobody' did receive during his lifetime some of the recognition he deserved in other

fields where he was allowed a writing credit, notably science fiction, astronomy and UFO theories. And yet Binder realized that the comics, by far his most widely read work, from a peak of the 1.3 million copies of Captain Marvel in 1946 to the landmark Silver Age expansion of the Superman mythos via his writings about Jimmy Olsen, Krypto, the bottled city of Kandor, Bizarro and Supergirl, rarely if ever carried his byline. It is just as well that he kept detailed records of his assignments, which he shared with indexer Jerry Bails in the early Sixties.

Comics were not Otto's first passion. He got started by hammering away at the typewriter for the pulp magazines. He collaborated with his brother Earl under the pen-name "Eando Binder," as in "E and O" and "Binder" rhyming with "tinder," until Otto set out under his solo name. Schelly guides us through each stage of his career and personal life, putting the comic books into their contexts, as well as weaving in the life of another Binder brother, Jack, who ran



his comic shop from a carriage house (actually a glorified barn) behind his house. Through Jack's connections supplying complete packages to Fawcett Comics, Otto got his start at the company where he would eventually excel on their entire Marvel Family line.

It was Jack who seduced Otto into comics in the first place in 1939, by moving to New York as an art director and getting him assignments on minor back-up strips for Harry 'A' Chesler's production shop. Churning out short fillers sold to Centaur, MLJ, Street & Smith, Otto saw little future for the cut-price industry: "The comics I saw looked shoddy and I didn't think they would last." Working for Fawcett and learning much from Editor Frances Herron modified his skepticism. In a 1941 article

he dared to suggest, "By a process of evolution another year from today may see 60-page stories comparable to your favorite novelettes by science-fiction authors, with pictures telling the story instead of [just] words." His increasing output of full scripts was now starting to tap into the potential of this fledgling medium.

Schelly brings together many insights into his working methods, his strengths and his sheer productivity. Otto estimated his output at 2,465 scripts, or 32,000 pages in all, between 1941 and 1960. Fawcett and later National DC were his biggest employers but Otto seems to have worked for almost everyone, from superheroes at Timely, over two dozen EC tales including an adaptation of his first Adam Link parable and Canadian herbes for Anglo-American to Gold Key, Warren and the short-lived Milson, home of the unique Fatman. Pounding away at the keys all day long in his pajamas and robe, he wore out four typewriters in the process. Schelly estimates Otto's peak earnings in 1944 during the so-called Golden Rut as equivalent to \$178,000 today, although in later years, especially after an unsuccessful space magazine venture, his finances grew much leaner.

Schelly pinpoints the three salient qualities of Binder's scripting that elevated it above the rest: "...his frequent use of science fictional settings, situations and gimmicks," his emphasis on the "strength and support" provided by supporting characters "who became part of the protagonist's extended family," and "a childlike quality that imbues his scripts with a kind of naïve charm." A pioneer comics writer of enormous energy, Binder recalls being "hypnotized by the medium we were so busy exploring." He brought to it a fertile imagination and a clear advocacy of equality and tolerance.

I did spot one error, where a paragraph has gone missing from the top of page 102. Bill has advised me that he is sending a special "Erratum Bookmark" with the missing text with each copy of the book he sells. He's also

assured me that if or when he reprints the book, this mistake will be corrected. Meantime, to set the record straight, here is that prodigal prose:

Another ongoing feature in Captain Marvel Adventures was Jon Jarl, Space Detective, a modest two-page text feature in each issue. Jarl, a sort of cadet version of Buck Rogers, began in CMA #66 (Oct 1946) with the appropriately titled "Adventures in Space." These short prose tales, which appeared under his old Eando Binder byline, gave Otto a place to make use of science fictional gimmicks that wouldn't fit into super-hero yarns, and make a little extra money in the process.

This book is rich with anecdotes and perceptive observations. For example, artist C.C. Beck first modeled Captain Marvel on actor Fred MacMurray, but Schelly proposes that, consciously or not, over time Beck made him resemble Binder. The photos of Otto's "perennial college boy appearance" bear this out. Similarly, Mr. Tawky Tawny, the tiger in a suit, can be seen as really Binder's satirical burlesque of himself. In a sensitive and non-judgmental fashion, Schelly also deals with more private matters: the antagonism of editor Mort Weisinger; the price of alcoholism on Otto and his wife; the awful loss of their daughter Mary, aged only 14, in a car accident; the decision to place their second child, Robert, a Downs Syndrome baby, into care and keep this a secret outside of the family.

This lovingly produced 256-page hardback chronicles Otto's life story through 19 chapters, illustrated by numerous rare photos of family and colleagues, extracts from comics and actual scripts and a packed 8-page color section. By interviewing so many relatives and friends and studying his correspondence, press coverage and conversations taped by fans, Schelly truly brings Binder alive on the page. He crafts a candid and sympathetic portrait that makes you feel that you have gotten to know the man almost as vividly as if you had met him in real life. No biographer could hope to do better. 

That Wonderful Year: 1959

[continued from page 78]

1948). I was stunned that the Archie Series would, and could, produce such a wonderful super-hero! Alas, The Shield was destined to last only two issues, although he would be revived a few years later.

I distinctly remember feeling cheated that *The Double Life of Private Strong* lasted only two issues. I recall being baffled about why *The Fly*, the first issue of which appeared two months after The Shield, continued being published. I bought only the first two of three issues of *The Fly* because I thought the character wasn't very appealing compared to DC's heroes, but The Shield more than held his own.

I was a little too old in 1959 to fully appreciate the genius of the Hanna-Barbara cartoons—remember, in those days youngsters on the cusp of becoming teenagers were not encouraged to watch cartoons on television, though they were still a guilty pleasure in the theaters. Nevertheless, *Four Color* #990 (May/Jul), with the first appearance of Huckleberry Hound and Yogi Bear, was much appreciated then and is much more so today.

There were too many Dell Westerns published in 1959 to cover in this column, but let's just say they made for lots of good reading. I especially loved *The Rifleman* on television and was pleased when he debuted in comics in *Four Color* #1009 (Jul/Sep). That was a compelling series, and Chuck Connors was truly wonderful casting. He seemed real in a way no other western character ever did.

One of my favorite Disney comic book covers appeared in 1959—*Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #224 (May). That's the marvelous cover (not by Carl Barks, though) with Huey, Dewey and Louie dressed up as Zorro along with Unca Donald, who was frustrated at finding Chip 'N' Dale sound asleep in his Zorro hat, hanging from a tree.

These days, I guess they would call that "business synergy." But in that wonderful year 1959, I remember laughing a lot when I saw that cover! 

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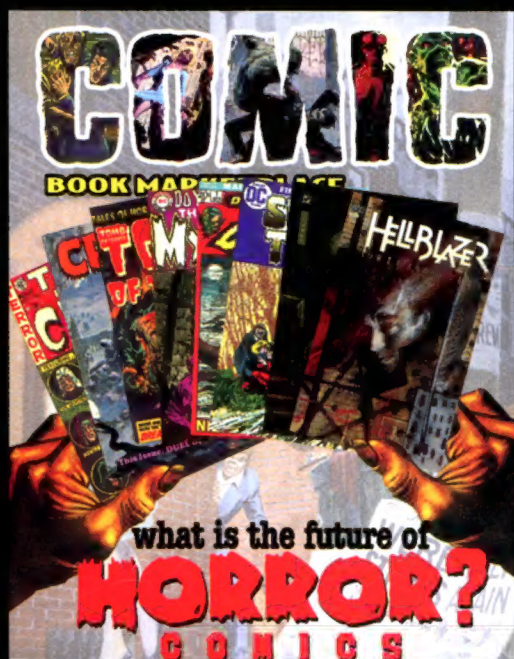
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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #114



We all know that EC's *Tales From the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror* and *Haunt of Fear* started a New Trend in comics which other publishers were quick to imitate. After being virtually eradicated by the Comics Code in the mid-1950s, horror comics have struggled back to the newsstand in the form of magazines like *Creepy* and *Eerie* in the 1960s and 1970s. What is the future of horror comics? That's the question we pose in *Comic Book Marketplace* #114.



Michael Kronenberg Interview with *The Black Forest* writer and film director Robert Tinnell.



Will Murray examines The Incredible Hulk's roots to Frankenstein.



Bill Baker explores Dark Horse and Mike Mignola's creation Hellboy.



Dan Johnson examines DC's horror titles from the 1970s and 1980s.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #115



Most comic books are a collaborative creation of many minds. The concept, the writing, the layout, the penciling, the inking and the lettering can involve the talents of many people. But there were a few creators of comic books, like Will Eisner, Carl Barks, Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman and John Stanley, who produced their works as solo efforts. These are the auteurs of comics. *CBM* #115 takes a look at these giants.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #116



In *Comic Book Marketplace* #116 we take a look at a serious topic: First, how Jews created the comic book in the first place, and then, how crusading publishers like William M. Gaines used this medium to fight against racism and anti-Semitism in stories like "Judgment Day," "Master Race" and the regular series of "preachies" which appeared in *Shock SuspenStories* in the early 1950s.